THE GREAT BETRAYAL

SUFI A. Q. NIAZ

CONFLUX PUBLICATIONS
4, McLEOD ROAD, LAHORE

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By

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

EDWIN E. FORESTER	.. American Newspaperman, with contacts in the CIA.
JAMES R. SOLOMON	.. Another American Newspaperman. Friend of Edwin E. Forester.
JOHN S. GILBERT	.. Local Manager of Consultant Engineers, a foreign concern. Presumably a CIA man, higher up on the ladder than Forester.
JASWANT SINGH	.. A headman of village Kartarpur. Secretly, boss of a bandit gang.
RULLIARAM	.. A goldsmith of Kartarpur, victim of a bandit raid.
BIMLA	.. Young daughter of the goldsmith.
GANGU AND RAMU	.. Old peasants of Kartarpur.
KARAN SINGH	.. Young son of Gangu. On very good terms with the goldsmith.
RUPCHAND	.. Inspector of Police. Investigating Officer on the Kartarpur dacoity.
HIKMATRAM	.. A lawyer, President of the Citizens' League.
BALWANTRAJ	.. Lawyer, General Secretary of the Citizens' League. Central figure in this organisation.
BHUPINDAR	.. Bandit chief on a far greater scale than Jaswant.

PURI, NANDLAL, SHARMA,
JAGANLAL, MURLIDHAR, BIRUMAL,
LACHMANDAS, BRIJNATH, DAULATRAM,
THAKURDAS, KASHIRAM,
SURAJMAL, DEVRAJ.

Prominent members of the Working Committee of the Citizens' League.

INTRODUCTION

From the USA of George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln, to the USA of President Johnson, is a very far, a very distressing, tragic cry. At that time, the great country had a conscience. Now it has None. Whatever little is still left, it is being eroded.

Uncle Sam, instead, has grown a Nose of an extraordinary length. At the tip of this Nose, he has grown a bewildering number of firm and tenacious tantacles, like those of an octopus, with an inordinate impulse to poke them into the affairs of other people, thousands of miles away, across rolling oceans, all over the world. We see them wrapped round Korea, Viet Nam, India and Pakistan, the Arab Homelands, South Africa and Rhodesia, the Congo, Nigeria—practically everywhere, helping the Whites to kill the Blacks. In many places, by some super-satanic magic, he is persuading the Blacks to kill other Blacks.

It is really too tragic, to be funny, when we find President Johnson violating the Constitution of USA, which he swore to defend, when he took the oath of office; and he is persuading the American people that this is the finest thing an American President has ever done, in the entire history of USA. He has invented a technique for fighting a war, without declaring it. To begin a Shooting War without a straight and honest declaration to that effect, is like shooting a man in the back—an act too mean even for a mean desperado in the badlands of the Wild West. This is also his master technique for side-stepping the Congress.

Even in the presence of pacts and alliances, the final judgement lies with the Congress that conditions had come into being which made a pact or alliance operative, to lead USA into a war.

With help from obliging friends in the Congress, when Uncle Sam stoops to work such heartless frauds, whom does he think he is deceiving? First and foremost, is he not fooling his own countrymen—the American people themselves, in other places, and other contexts, who are proverbially sensitive in the matter of their rights and privliges? Why don't the American people call Johnson to account for this flagrant violation of the Constitution? Does it mean they, too, are involved in working this fraud?

Fulbright faced the situation with courage, and vision, when he said the only remedy was 'impeachment' of the President. But

this courage failled him, in the same breath, when he said politically the step was 'impractical'. If, however, the worthy Senators and Representatives must try to save the President from being flayed alive by a re-awakening national conscience, they are throwing away the last chance to retrieve the fair name of USA from the muck into which it has been flung by Presidents like Truman and Johnson. Even the venerable old Ike says in places where human life is not considered to have any great value, the tactical use of atomic weapons is justified.

Anyway, if President Johnson is not checked, the Americans would come to be the most hated people in human history, for having felt and acted like some breed of fiends and monsters, at a juncture when they should, and could, have behaved like angels and veritable gods, for devotion to truth and justice.

In crucial and cruel moments, such as these, one cannot help exclaiming : "God is not in the heart of the American. All is wrong with the world !"

When it is not yoked to a good purpose, power is a curse. A mad ambition seems to have taken possession of President Johnson's mind. He appears to have planned, in his own mind, that he should become the greatest President of USA, for all times to come. There is emphatic evidence in the trend of international events that his aim is ruthlessly to crush resistance to global American policies, wherever it has dared to raise its head. He seems to be driven by a relentless resolve to strike terror into the heart of Asia and Africa, to ensure that at least for fifty years, or even a century, no one should dare to face the Americans.

But why should American global policies be sacrosanct in the eyes of the Afro-Asians, when they are based on sordid and narrow American interests alone—when they have no moral foundation that anyone can see?

After all, when you come to think of the matter, what is the moral, or immoral, genesis of the American proclaimed policy of a containment of China? The Chinese people have never done any harm to USA. What they are doing amounts only to this that they are striving within their homeland to rise to their natural stature, and become strong, in a world where weakness is fatal. Does Washington claim any Divine Right that USA should be the most powerful

country on the surface of the earth? Does it hold that no one else should be strong, even inside the boundary wall of his own home? Why does it believe it should have the right to interfere with the growth and development of other countries? Why the frantic search for an excuse to strike down China, before it rises to its proper stature? Why does it desire to perpetuate hostility between India and China? Between India and Pakistan ; between the Jews and the Arabs? Why did it create Israel, in sheer defiance of Arab rights in their own homelands? Why does it desire to perpetuate a seething hate between the Arabs and Israel? Why is it encouraging the Jews to grab the entire southern and eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean?

President Johnson has played another trick on his own people, to establish himself in a supreme position in his country, to the detriment of the Congress, and the will of the American citizen. He has taken USA to the point of No Return, in Viet Nam, for instance; also in the matter of Israel and the Arabs. In fact he has pampered the Jews so much they appear to be running out of all control. They seem set for a series of frogleaps, to grab the entire length of the Mediterranean seaboard of Asia Minor and North Africa. The idea would have been ridiculed, if an obscure journalist in Lahore had been the only person to formulate it. Fortunately, however, he is not alone. Toyanbee also has sensed the eventuality, in his own place, though he has done it from a negative angle. He has examined the possibility, then ruled it out as an impractical proposition (*Pakistan Times*, August 10, 1967). This estimate on his part, however, is not correct. Drawing freely upon the Jews in foreign lands, Israel has enough manpower, with means to pull off the trick, in a series of frogleaps, carefully phased, accurately timed, and properly executed, seemingly to make it a success, for a time, at any rate. When the retribution came, that would be a different matter. At the moment, however, Israel and her powerful, and power-drunk foreign friends, are not in a mood to think of these things. The prevailing mood is one for world conquest, in careful coordination with the Anglo-American Combine.

This is where we come face to face with the mysteries of Russian policy, in and around the Mediterranean. The present phase of the Arab-Israeli clash seems to bear out that Moscow

has made a free gift of the area, and its destiny, to Washington and London. Behind the scenes, however, Russia must have extracted a price commensurate with the surpassing strategic value of the area. Now what is that price?

Here one is reminded of an old ambition of Russia, for a warm water seaport, on the Persian Gulf, by preference. But, extremely easy in itself, for a power like Russia, the path has always been blocked by Washington and London. However, in the peculiar prevailing situation, it is possible Moscow may have come to feel sure, if Iran, overnight, became a Socialist Republic, in some lightning move, and joined the Soviet Union, the Anglo-American Combine would not want to ask any questions—especially because this staggering development would also suit the private, sweet purposes of London and Washington as well. The Muslim World would be cut clean into two, at the waist. Moreover, any contemplated Chinese land route to the Levant would be nipped in the bud. Thus it would be quite a befitting return gift from London and Washington. Remnants of the Todeh, or some of its descendants, might cook up a revolution, to send up a Voice on the air, proclaiming the birth of a Socialist Republic in Iran, and the fact that it had joined the Soviet Union. The Russian response, naturally, would be sure and swift. Iran then would come to be an integral part of the USSR, as the Hawaii Islands now form an integral part of the USA.

This is an unprecedented peril with which the Muslim World now stands face to face. The only thing that can deliver us from this peril is the good sense, and the political sagacity, of the people of Iran.

When I began writing this Play, I had no idea that Great Betrayals were lying scattered so thick, practically, over every square mile of the earth.

The Play was completed two years ago. It has taken quite as long as that to get into print. Here is a hint for those who share with me my sense of danger, and my inability to move hand or foot.

Sufi Abdul Qadeer Niaz

4 McLeod Road, Lahore
September 1967.

THE GREAT BETRAYAL

ACT ONE SCENE ONE

Room in a private suite, at the New Order, the most highbrow hotel in New Delhi. Seems to have been furnished partly as a sitting room, partly as a cosy corner for small, private parties—breakfast, lunch, dinner, or late supper. Spacious enough for such purposes, but not too big, to avoid giving it a dreary look, when not peopled by a crowd. Deep cushioned chairs and sofa sets, for about a dozen people. A sideboard, with a heavy load of bottles and glasses, and high class, artistic containers, for mixing cocktails. If you peer at the labels on the bottles, you read the names of well-known brands of whisky, brandy, gin, rum, port sherry—and champagne.

Early morning, about half past seven. At one end of the dining table in the left hand corner, two men, going through a leisurely breakfast. One verging on the late forties; the other very much younger. Both splendid specimen of the careless, casual, nonchalant type, the hallmark of gentlemen of quality and breeding. Both lazily intent on their bacon and eggs: the elder, satisfied and serene; the younger, with furrows on his brow, rather confused, and vexed. Presently a waiter removes the plates, and puts coffee on the table. His movements are deft and swift, absolutely noiseless. Silently, then, he opens a door, hardly a few inches, and disappears.

The older gentleman, Edwin E. Forester, glances at his companion, with rather a surprised look, which the other, James R. Solomon, does not notice.

FORESTER:

Well, what is it? Why are you looking so glum? (*Solomon makes no reply*; *the other continues*). Take my advice; spit it out. You will feel immediate relief. I never imagined you had it in you to pull such a long face over anything. Come on, let us hear all about it.

SOLOMON:

(*Still preoccupied, staring blankly in front*).

I have been reading a few things about Tibet.

FORESTER:

Good, that is very good. You should have. A very interesting place. The highest habitable plateau on the earth, you know: air very bracing. Sitting here with you, even as I think of the place, I begin to feel myself on top of the world....Well, what about it?

SOLOMON:

Excuse me if I say I fail to see the point of your raillery. I believe Tibet can be very important in certain eventualities. We should have taken the long-range view, before Mao did that. We must admit he has been very deft over it. He obtained a firm hold on the place before we got any inkling of what he was up to. Don't you feel a measure of chagrin at the way he has beaten us all?

FORESTER:

I do; certainly I do. What makes you think I don't?

SOLOMON:

You are so damned cool, as you talk about the matter. You hardly make your voice audible. You are speaking so calmly—almost in a soft, lisping, caressing whisper.

FORESTER:

Why do you think I should get excited about it? I have sent very full despatches. Is there anything else I should have done? You have complimented Mao, over the thoroughness of his long-range plans, and his quick implementation. What makes you think we have no long range plans of our own, in time, to beat him at the game?

SOLOMON:

We may have a hundred and one plans, now; that does not matter much. When Mao moved, he caught us napping. From the military point of view, now, we are hardly—we can hardly get into the picture. The place is so remote from our shores, it is so far deep in the heart of Asia, that we have no standing on the problem, to justify interference on our part, or on the part of U.K,

after London scuttled the British Empire in India. Plans made in advance, and executed immediately, when power was handed over to the Indian National Congress, and the masses sold to the Caste Hindus, we could have secured a foothold of some kind, in collaboration with Britain. When Peking moved to get a firm hold on Tibet, working with London, we should have been there earlier, to head off the Chinese. But New Delhi, London and Washington, all three, were taken by surprise; left dumb; practically unnerved. Our hands froze stiff, yards away from the guns we carried in our belts, ready for the showdown. When Mao rasped out 'stick them up', we raised our hands sky-high, backed down, and out of the line of fire from Peking, of which the slickness and speed with a .45 we had sampled to some extent in Korea. So here we are. I hope you would pardon me if I find myself constrained to say that in all this I can see no sign of any sensible long-range plan on our side.

FORESTER:

Don't you worry, old boy. Your digestion appears to be upset. Perhaps it is a touch of the liver. As for the urgency of some long-range programmes on our side, by and by, you would have plenty. From the point where we stand at the moment, the final showdown is still a long way off. Anyhow, that is the view in quarters which count.

SOLOMON:

You may be right. I hope you are. But I must say you tax my credulity a great deal too much when you tell me there is nothing to worry about in the present situation. You know we received a good deal of rough handling in Korea. To accentuate the humiliation, we have had to sit silent and dumb, while Peking tightened its hold on the Top of the World.

FORESTER:

My dear fellow, the trouble is that in this unworthy fit of depression, you are not giving proper heed to what I am saying. There is no need for you, or anyone else, on our side, to worry about anything—no, not in the least. I myself, and a number of far more

competent and well placed people, have a fairly heavy list of contacts in the official and non-official circles in New Delhi, not excluding that wonderful gentleman, Pundit Nehru, the Prime Minister of India—the rightful heir to that Jar of a fine Pickle, compounded from the tradition and philosophy of the great Gandhi, on one side, the might and grandeur of the British Empire in India, on the other. The idea that Tibet, of right, should fall in the Indian sphere of influence, has been finely, invisibly, but deeply and firmly, injected into his mind. It has taken root and started to grow. I have seen signs that stupendous developments are, even now, in train, of which the culmination, soon enough, shall make even pessimistic people like you bounce in their seats with pleasant surprise.

SOLOMON:

So you think the situation can still be retrieved?

FORESTER:

Oh, sure; certainly it can: of course, of course. You do not seem to be aware of the vantage point from which I see these things. I had never imagined you were such a Babe in the Woods of South East Asian politics and provocations. Take my word for it, old boy; everything is in fine trim.

SOLOMON:

What is your vantage point, if I might ask?

FORESTER:

The full sweep of the mighty forces represented by the Secret Services of USA and UK—especially when they collaborate for the attainment of a given aim.

SOLOMON:

So that is what makes you so cocksure. Poor old Forester! You make me laugh!

FORESTER:

Do I? That is very good. I really am trying to make you laugh. I want to take you out of this mood of an unseemly depression. Why do you assume we are a played out people?

SOLOMON:

I have no idea whether we are a played out people, or not. But I know you are displaying a lamentable unawareness of the terrible, relentless forces, silently at work, at the back of the population pressures, providence seems to be building up, with its own unerring hands. The defiant courage and will of the human mind, when it wakes up, and decides to work out its destiny, irrespective of the cost, it is the most powerful factor in human affairs. When it desires to be free, there is nothing can hold it in bondage. Forces you thought you had on your side, miserably failed to keep your man, Chiang Kaishek, in the saddle. You did your level best to keep that vast country, with its incalculable potential, under your own thumb. But, out of the darkness, Mao suddenly, inexorably, burst into the arena. He pushed you, and your precious tools, into the sea, where you stay, to this day. Do you think Marshal Chiang Kaishek, in Formusa, is a sign of our victory?

(*He pauses for an answer, but there is none*).

FORESTER:

Go on. Why have you stopped?

SOLOMON:

You see, you cannot face this question. You also know there are many more. They bury their poison fangs into your flesh, and you cannot shake them off.

FORESTER:

Let's have them all in a bundle.

SOLOMON:

From your reluctance to take up the issue, I conclude you are not so daft, after all. At least you seem to know when you are beaten....beaten thin, you know.

(*He gives Forester a long look, half comic, and half serious. He takes note of a puzzled frown on his friend's face, which he fails to fathom*).

FORESTER:

Go on. I'll concede there is a lot of pepper in your taunts. You must have been a good debater, while at school, where youngsters say things only for the joy and distinction of saying them in brilliant style.

SOLOMON:

No, no. Don't be an idiot. I am not trying to imply I have beaten you in this painful argument. I mean that Mao has beaten the USA, and her friends, first in China; then in Korea; then in Veit Minh. Hasn't he, now?

(*He gives Forester another long look; is surprised and puzzled to see that Forester's features have settled into a firm expression....heartless, and extremely cruel. He is struck aghast, but continues*).

SOLOMON:

My dear fellow, what on earth is the matter with you? Don't be ridiculous. Your face bears a look as if you had decided to kill me. Nothing personal. Merely as a matter of some confounded principle. Do you want to frighten me? You are looking grim and terrible. Are you ill? Overtaken by some sudden pain? Should I ring for medical help?

FORESTER:

(*With a smile so forced it could be noticed from a distance of many miles*).

Don't be a silly ass; I am perfectly all right. Thank God I do not have a nervous kind of physic, as seems to be the case with you. (*He rises from the table in perfect composure, with a perfect poker face*). I shall be away all day. Wouldn't be back for lunch. Shall take a bite of something, somewhere. I am due for dinner at a friend's. I am not expecting to be back until late at night. When we meet tomorrow at breakfast, I hope you would not decline to give me a certificate for medical fitness. (*With a delightful chuckle, considering it is only a bit of playacting*). I am not being personal: only a matter of moral principle. You may call it an immoral principle, if you like. I never was a stickler in things of this kind. (*He waves his hand a little, very, very gently, then walks away to his room*).

ACT ONE SCENE TWO

A village *chaupal*, furnished with a huge *charpai*—a thoroughly uncouth affair, a heavy wooden frame, on massive legs, interwoven with a rough and thick string, twisted from some coarse material. It is outspokenly clumsy, built for strength and endurance. It is large enough to accommodate more than half a dozen people, perched on it in various positions and postures. It is placed almost in the middle of the biggish courtyard of the *chaupal*, with pegs and mangers for the cattle along the compound wall. Some feet from the *charpai* is a small platform for the seat of the *mukhya* (headman) when present. It is rather late in the afternoon. Looking over the low compound wall, a long stretch of ripening wheat fields are in full view. The air is rather oppressive, the sun dull, hidden behind a kind of film, whether of dust or clouds, it is difficult to say. The *chaupal* bears a deserted look. The cattle are not yet back, from work in the fields, or the day's grazing.

Only two men are seen in the *chaupal*, both seated on the ground. Both are characterised by deep furrows on the brow. Scantily clad, in ragged *dhoties*. Ramu, the elder of the two, should be somewhere in the middle fifties. The other, Gangu, appears to be very nearly of the same age, and the same status in the village. When conversation opens between the two, their voices are spiritless and tired.

RAMU:

It must be quite some time, now, since the mad and bloody events of the Partition. I remember most people used to say in those days it was the commencement of a wonderful era for the country. We were told that the problems and needs of the poorer people, like us, would receive the greatest and immediate attention of those in positions of power and authority. But so far I have seen, no sign of the happy and blessed changes, anywhere around. The hand of the *patwari* and the policeman, and the corrupt village headman remains as heavy on us as ever before—in fact, far heavier.

GANGU:

Let me see. It must be more than ten years now. Very curious, isn't it? Usually one doesn't notice how time flies, in one sense, anyway. But when I feel the old aches all over my poor carcase, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, time seems to hang so heavy on my rotten shoulders, I am painfully surprised why I don't peg off. That would be a way out of the present misery, wouldn't it? What do you think?

RAMU:

One shouldn't be so castdown. Shouldn't give way to despair. You are not as lonely as I am. If nothing else, you have at least your son. A fine young lad: healthy and strong, straight and honest; one of the most reliable in the village.

GANGU:

Yes, that is one consolation, it is true. But the boy, of late, has been silent and aloof. In fact, ever since the night........ (*He sighs, and sinks into silence*).

RAMU:

(*Opening his eyes wider, and giving Gangu a look, half tired, and half benign*). Go on; I am listening. Don't think I had dozed off.

GANGU:

Something about the boy was on the tip of my tongue, when I stopped. It is not always safe for us poor people to be heard talking of things. But you and I have been friends all our life. I would trust you over things where I wouldn't trust anyone else. Do you remember the night when a pack of gunmen broke into Rulliaram's house, held the old goldsmith by the throat, and leisurely cleared out with all the stuff the old man had so assiduously accumulated over the years, for the day his daughter should come to be married. I have heard strange whispers about the robbery. (*His voice drops; it becomes almost inaudible*).

RAMU:

(*Bending forward, and stretching himself out, to speak in the other's ear*). So have I. Do you think what is being said is true?

GANGU:

Partly at least. That was an awful night. I am sure I don't know what things are coming to these days. But I was figuring to tell you something about my son. Hope you would help me with your sincere opinion. There is no one else to whom I can go for advice in a matter of this kind.

RAMU:

You need have no fear on that account; no fear at all. You should know, by this time, that I have always thought very well of you. Moreover, I like your boy, in his own place. Tell me what is your anxiety in regard to him.

GANGU:

It is difficult to explain; difficult to put into precise and clear words. He was never very talkative, you know. But now he is more silent and aloof than ever before. He looks grim, as though his heart were gradually hardening for some desperate resolve. If I look at him, he becomes uneasy, and drifts away, under one pretext, or another. He seems to have retired into an inner shell, where he lives entirely alone, harrowed by some hidden grief, or some biting passion.

RAMU:

Have you tried to ascertain what is preying on his mind?

GANGU:

I have. Some of my questions he answers readily enough. Others he answers evasively, or he does not answer at all. Apart from his work in the fields, he often remains away from home. When I questioned him on the point, he told me he goes to town in connection with matters, which he says, have nothing to do with me. This argument he uses frequently, when I ask questions he is not prepared to answer. Sometimes he returns home fairly late in the night. On other occasions, he goes out early in the morning,

virtually at daybreak. Of course, the six miles, out to the town and back, do not mean anything for a young man of his age and physic. But he is not inclined to tell me the purpose of these visits, except that he has a friend there, on whom he relies a great deal, for advice on matters of great import. He tells me they are of a nature where I can be of no use, being illiterate, unaware of the confusing cultural and political struggles, on the surface, or deep down, which touch our weal and woe, while we are hardly in a position to play our part, with any measure of power and success.

RAMU:

There seems to be a great deal more to it than tends to appear on the surface. Get him to take you with him, when he next goes to town, to see this friend. From what I know of the young man's nature and temperament, I don't think he would want to make any very great difficulty over that. He is sensible and straight enough to realise you have a right to know a little more about things which touch you, and him, so closely. I hear voices coming this way. Let us leave the matter at that, till you have seen this friend of your son. (*He rises slowly to his feet, and shuffles along, out into the street. Gangu remains sitting where he was—sad, and lost in his thought*).

ACT ONE SCENE THREE

A big open quadrangle at the back of an imposing temple, dedicated to the worship of the *Kali Devi*. In the middle is a round pit, five or six feet deep, and the same in diametre. The mouth of the pit is choking full of roaring flames, leaping to right and left, and all points of the compass, in restless tongues, throwing up on the walls a ruddy glow, investing the place with an uncanny, wierd, and sinister atmosphere.

By and by, the flames subside, as the firewood fed into the pit is consumed, leaving behind an enormous mass of liquid embers, at the bottom of the pit. The air

is heavy with the smell of sandalwood, and many kinds of other material sprinkled on the embers at the bottom.

All round the pit, but a safe distance from its mouth, are seats arranged in a circle, on a thick carpet, with a covering of cloth, milk white in colour. Each seat is marked out from the others, with a big pillow, of an intense black, for the occupant of the seat to lean against, if he so desired. The seats are all occupied, except one, which seems to have been reserved for the head of the strange gathering.

The participants seem to be tense, with an air of expectation, waiting for the personage who would preside over the sacred rites, handed down from generations far back in dim antiquity.

Suddenly a door opened in the wall on the right side of the pit. A mysterious human figure emerged silently, and walked with dignity to the seat reserved for him. He is clad in white, flowing robes; but he is wearing a mask. Faces of other occupants of the seats are open. They loudly proclaim that they have been heavily made up for the occasion. The moment the presiding person takes his seat, he makes a gesture with his right hand, to signify that the proceedings should commence.

The man on his right then rises to his feet, and mumbles some sacred texts. This is followed by an announcement.

FIRST OCCUPANT:

Gentlemen, we have assembled, here, to give our best consideration to a plan designed to add infinitely to the power and prestige of Bharatvarsh, as placed in the modern context of current events. The outline of the plan is very well known to you all. In the names of the heroes whose innermost thoughts and souls you represent, duly assigned to you under the sacred rites of the Vedas, as interpreted and established by the great Rishies in our glorious history. Speak without fear, or hope of favour.

SECOND OCCUPANT:

I speak as inspired by the Soul of the great Sivaji. The military operations covered by the Memorandum circulated as a confidential document, should be carried out forthwith. History

has linked Tibet with Bharatvarsh. Peking has no right over it. The Chinese have no right over it: they must be thrown out, and a regime put into power which would gratefully accept our advice and brotherly influence. Warlike tribes on the borders of NEFA are ripe for rebellion against Peking. The money and equipment they need has, through us, been made available by our friends, on whom we can place the utmost reliance. They are pledged to see us through. In fact, they are far more keen on it than we are ourselves, even though they gain little, except indirectly.

THIRD OCCUPANT:

I speak as inspired by the Soul of Tilak. A resolute green light should immediately be given for these forces to come into play. Since the base of the rebellion is to be on territories contiguous to NEFA, money and material can easily be slipped into their hands, in all sorts of circumstances. The Press should be briefed to throw out hints that supplies come from Formusa, by air.

FOURTH PARTICIPANT:

I speak as inspired by the Soul of Dr. Moonji. Tibet must be snatched out of the hands of Mao. Military strategy demands that we build a nest there for our own Eagles. The government, as such, should take no interest in these operations: everything should be done by a combine of the Mahasabha, the Rashtria Sevak Suwayam Sangh, the Jan Sangh, and some of the smaller political parties and organisations of the country, to leave the hands of the government unsullied.

FIFTH PARTICIPANT:

I speak as inspired by the Soul of Vir Savarkar. This is the time for action. It is not to be wasted on words. If we lose this golden opportunity, another, of this kind and magnitude, may not come for a long, long time. Let the grand design be implemented without delay.

SIXTH PARTICIPANT:

I speak as inspired by the Soul of Pundit Madan Mohan Malviya. Where the Souls of Sivaji, of Tilak, Vir Savarkar, and Golwalkar lead, I follow, with the utmost confidence.

SEVENTH PARTICIPANT:

I speak as inspired by the Soul of Godse. No sacrifice is too big when the aim is to enhance the strength and glory of Bharatvarsh. This was the frame of my mind when I opened fire on Mahatma Gandhi.

EIGHTH PARTICIPANT:

I speak as inspired by the Soul of Patel, who broke the jaws of the Sikhs in Patiala, Nabha, Faridkot, Sangrur and Jind. Let us go ahead. There is no reason why we should hesitate.

THE PRESIDING PRIEST:

Allow me to thank you for the solid support you are giving to a key operation. Irrespective of the success, or failure, of the operation, the outcome, in any case, shall add to the stature and strength of our sacred Homeland. There is no need for me to conceal the fact that our foreign friends are with us to the hilt. They have been fully persuaded that the conquest of Tibet, by us, is quite as indispensable for their own global strategy as it is for the defence of Bharat, in certain eventualities. When the curtain goes up on these operations, you will be glad to find that the Indian National High Command shall never suffer from any shortage of money or material. With the positive decision you have given just now, we have the vast resources of UK, and USA, permanently in our pocket. I thank you once more, and declare this session of the Sacred Agnikund Council closed for tonight. My best wishes, gentlemen. Good Night.

(*All, in a kind of chorus, good night, sir! Good Night!*).

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

A sumptuously furnished drawing room, at the residence of John S. Gilbert, local manager of Consultant Engineers, a big foreign concern. Gilbert and Forester are having a quiet talk over their coffee, after dinner. In build and age, the two appear to be much the same. But Forester's manner has an imperceptible touch of deference. Gilbert's general bearing is remarkably easy and free, as if he were entirely unaware of the superior position he occupies in the eyes of Forester.

GILBERT:

It is rather sad and unfortunate, what you have told me in regard to Solomon. People obsessed with a 'conscience' often fall a victim to moods of this kind. Given proper handling, some regain their mental poise, while many sink deeper and deeper, into doubts on many perfectly legitimate national purposes and policies. If you can manage it, get him a spot of home leave, from the Paper he is on. Since he displays this frame of mind on the basic principles of Washington's foreign policies, there can be no question of recruitment. We have had to exert a good deal, in many sectors, to secure the support of the Sacred Agnikund Council. Now the rebellion in Tibet should be bursting out into the open, within a week from today. You have your assignment clear before you?

FORESTER:

Absolutely. At the Zero Hour I shall be at the Wireless Base. I stay there until reports confirm success of the initial moves in all directions. It is very well understood that no clue is to be given to the Press, anywhere, as to what is taking place. There does not appear to be any danger of leakage to the Indian Press. The Combined High Command of the political parties in India, working with us, could teach us a lesson or two, where the maintenance of secrecy is concerned. The only danger in this respect lies at the former points of contact created by the British Army Intelligence.

GILBERT:

Hasn't that been taken care of?

FORESTER:

Yes. Arrangements have been made that these points shall remain muffled, the old hands being with us, to the hilt. If any leakage does take place, it will come from members of the direct contacts with the British or European Press, which might have escaped being trampled out by the time factor, and the care taken now, to extinguish them completely. The operations, as you know, have been planned to proceed carefully, giving a wide enough berth to these points on the map. The lunge at Lhasa will maintain a thick curtain between itself and these points. No news, success or failure, shall come through, except for us, through channels created by us, for the purpose. If any leakage to the Euro-Press does take place, it will be possible only as the rebellion approaches the military and the political goals.

GILBERT:

There is one point on which I would like to hear your views once more. It is important that we make no mistake on that score. What is your independent estimate of the adhesive strength of these Indian political parties, in regard to this great adventure? A feeling of jealousy could be terribly devastating. Any danger on that point, now, or later, at some future stage?

FORESTER:

No danger at all. No, I do not think so. Leaders of these parties have a fairly clear idea of their strength, in comparison with each other. None will think of creating trouble, much less defection, since weakness in this respect, on the part of any, is bound to be looked upon by the others, as an act of treachery, not patriotism, as long as the Presiding Priest of the Sacred Agnikund Council remains firm. No, there won't be any weakness, much less defection.

GILBERT:

Are you sure. ?

FORESTER:

Yes, I am quite sure. The Caste Hindu mind is burning day and night to wipe out the disgrace of centuries of foreign rule.

Conquest, right and left, is essential for vindication of the sense of honour and self-respect. These zealots, since they are not anything very much less, or more, in that respect, are clear headed and competent enough to see, anyway, it is essential, for a considerable length of time, that they get some dependable friend, UK and USA, for instance, to nurse and develop their military strength. This is the moral side, you can say, of the Indian support for the venture in Tibet, and for a total assimilation of our policy in regard to China and Japan.

GILBERT:

I must say your view is very heartening. Are you as sure of your ground as all that?

FORESTER:

I do not have the least doubt.

GILBERT:

What about the old idea of India being, or becoming the champion of the Freedom of Asia?

FORESTER:

Yes, the idea was there—for some time. But then the Caste Hindu mind made a sudden jump, sideways, so that the freedom of Asia, and Africa, too, if you like, became Asia's freedom, under the surveillance of India. This is the point where any possibility of leadership on the part of China became highly obnoxious. All the time the Indian National Congress was patting itself on the back, for its courage in fighting against British Imperialism, political thought and aspirations of the Caste Hindu mind were influenced, in fact shaped, under an extra subtle British intellectual tutelage, perhaps, not even intended. The Caste Hindu mind was fired by an ambition to create an empire bigger and more compact, far more powerful, than even the British Empire, at its mightiest.

GILBERT:

(*Thoughtfully caressing his chin*). H....m, I see. You seem to be fairly on the right tack. So that is how resurgent China became a hated rival, to be crushed at the earliest opportunity—in fact not

even given a chance to rise to any stature at all. The popular current of thought, for some time, before and after Bandung, *in favour of Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai*, in that case, was only a freak and fickle vein of political thought. Wasn't it?

FORESTER:

(*After some seconds of thoughtful silence, as if he had heard something rather upsetting for the sequence in which his thoughts and reflections, on the growth of political thought in India, had come to be arranged and set*). A freak and fickle vein, one might call it; or a sudden burst of goodwill for a weak neighbour, in a moment of national fervour, when you are new to a sense of your own power and great goodness—the moneylender's sympathy for the growing children of his financial victims, or intended victims. We shouldn't suppose the China of Chiang Kaishek had anything which could inspire an astute Indian businessman, or political leader, with fear.

GILBERT:

So you, for one, have no doubt that the anti-China tendencies of the Indian political leader's mind, so much, and so unmistakably in evidence at the moment, are symptoms of a settled state of mind, on this question.

FORESTER:

No, I haven't. This is also the impression of many other competent observers on our side, who have made a long and careful study of Indian history, which, really speaking, is a long story of an extremely sinister, but subtle, capacity of the Caste Hindu mind for intrigue and conspiracy designed to keep itself in a position of authority and power, directly or indirectly. That is how the original inhabitants of the country were turned into 'Untouchables'; how Buddhism was practically driven into exile, after the time of Asoka, with help from barbarians invited from the north-west, who were then absorbed into the Indo-Aryan social order, as Rajputs. When this conspiracy was given shape, and implemented, leaders of these fighting forces were declared to have been miraculously born out of the sacred fire of the Agnikund, held at the time by sage Brahmans of the period.

GILBERT:

Your interpretation of ancient Indian history is certainly very fascinating, but quite pragmatic. It explains many tendencies of the Caste Hindu leadership, today, as well as in earlier eras.

FORESTER:

All these are so many reasons, rooted in history, and deep in the Indian mind, why the potential Indian capitalist and businessman, and the potential military leadership will remain predisposed to listen to our advice, just as long as they continue to feel we are helping them industrially, and militarily, to a greater and greater industrial complex, and fighting power, for the establishment of an Indian hegemony over South-East Asia, the Middle East, the outlying provinces of China, and finally over central China itself. Of course, the Indian aim, all along, would be to split China into the largest possible number of small states, incapable, singly, of making a stand against any Indian pressure, the way European powers broke up the Turkish Empire, by applying the principle of self-determination, into Bulgaria, Rumania, Albania, and so on. All these important and potent factors encourage me to take it that New Delhi would permanently desire to remain sure of support from London and Washington, on terms dictated by the global strategy of the Anglo-American combine, as long as it remains effective. (*He rises to his feet, and extends his hand*). With this, I beg to take leave for the present.

GILBERT:

(*Responding with a warm handshake*). OK. Let us say good-night on that. (*Forester walks to the door, opens it a little, and goes out, whistling softly*).

ACT TWO SCENE TWO

(House of Rulliaram, the goldsmith. The workshop, of which a door opens out on the street, is bolted on the inside. The door opposite opens into the parlour, usable as a bedroom, when there are guests. This door, too, is latched on the inside. Night time, getting rather late. Rulliaram is seated on a charpai, on the headside. Karan Singh, the young son of old Ramu, Karno, for short, is seated, rather respectfully, on the same charpai, at the other end. They have been talking in a low voice, though the position of the parlour is safe against evesdropping from anyone out in the street. Rulliaram calls softly to his daughter).

RULLIARAM:

Bimla, my child, come here for a while, if you have done the washing up, and the rest of your chores for the night.

BIMLA:

(*Responding immediately, as if she had been expecting, or hoping, for the call, and was glad when she got it*). Yes, father; I am coming at once. I have finished my work. (*She appears in the doorway of the parlour, on the small, inner courtyard, which gives access to other parts of the house. She remains standing modestly in the doorway, waiting for her father to speak, and tell her why he had called her*).

RULLIARAM:

Come in; come right in. This is Karan Singh—Karno, you know; your old playmate, when the two of you were small children. He was such an engaging little imp, in those days, that he used to get from me a slice of the love intended for you. He has been to school in the town; did his Matric very well; and that kind of thing, you know. In a way, however, he is also a little fool. Instead of getting a job somewhere in the town, he has come back to his father's meagre fields. But that is all up to him. What I want to tell you is that, on the quiet, he and I have talked about the robbery. Since I happen to know he is remarkably level-headed, I have discussed some aspects of the case with him. I gave him, briefly, some of your impressions; and your eyewitness account of portions

of the happenings of that shaking event. He says your evidence is of the utmost importance. In fact he says he is mystified why the investigating officer has not so far taken it down. Or, if he has taken it down, why does he not appear to have made proper use of it? Tell him what you saw with your own eyes; or heard with your own ears. (*He points to a stool, in a corner*). Bring up that stool. Give him all the facts, all the details, which some queer decree of the Fates has placed in your simple and innocent hands.

BIMLA:

(*Fetching the stool, and placing it by the wall, opposite the charpai, rather sideways, to avoid sitting directly and closely opposite to her father, and the young man. She is very beautiful: a clear complexion; a glorious figure, with poise and balance; large, truthful eyes, unfathomable in their innocent depth; medium height. Irrespective of whether she sat still, walked, or talked, she looked as if she were something remarkably fresh, very sacred, and precious*). You see.... You see....(*she began, in some confusion, then paused*). But hadn't I better ask you how, or where, I should begin?

KARNO:

Just whichever way it comes natural to you—your memory, or mind.

BIMLA:

You see, I was asleep when the gunmen broke into the room where father and I usually sleep. When the commotion woke me up, I found the small kerosine lamp burning, with its thin and sooty flame. Even at its brightest, you know, it gives only a dim light. But it was enough to show that a number of men—wild, cruel, sinister looking, with masks—were crowding round father, hitting him on the neck, on the head, and everywhere on his body, with their clenched fists, thundering for his bunch of keys, which I had under the pillow.

RULLIARAM:

Normally, in the house, the keys are always with her.

BIMLA:

When I took in the situation, I was terribly frightened. But I found myself thinking fast. In a flash, I realised it was very important how I behaved. Should I tell them the keys were with me? I was afraid of drawing their attention to myself. Nor was I sure what would father like me to do. However, before I had decided on anything, he rose from his charpai, and walked over to mine, groaning with pain. He took the keys, and held them out to the man nearest to himself. He took the bunch, and ordered father to lead them to the boxes and safes, wherever they were kept. Then, one by one, the bandits went out of the room, at the heels of the leader. All but one, who lingered by my side. His presence made me very nervous. Suddenly, he closed the door, and put the chain on. Then he turned round, and walked up to me, his beastly eyes running all over me, from head to foot.

(*She paused for a while, as though over-whelmed by the scene called up by her memory. But recovered, and resolute, she boldly picks up the thread, where she had left it*).

I was more frightened than you can imagine.

(*Again she paused for some seconds, then went on bravely*).

He tried to make love to me; tried to hold me in his arms. Twice he brought his hideous face close to mine. The second time he did this, something suddenly seemed to explode in my mind. I threw my fear to the winds, and made a desperate effort to tear off the mask from his face. He became wild with anger—and his beastly passion. He gathered me up in his arms; he was on the point of pressing his lips on mine, when there was sharp knock at the door—this door, you see.

(*She points to the door which opens into the small inner courtyard. She appears to be in considerable distress over the vile details she had to describe, with care, lest something of importance be left out*).

KARNO:

Go on, please. It must be painful for you to recount these details. But we must have the fullest knowledge of all aspects of the case, if we are to make them yield the fullest possible advantage.

(*A kind of tremor seems to pass all over the girl's body, as she proceeds*).

BIMLA:

The knock was repeated. I saw the bandit looking at the door, with baleful eyes. "Who is it?" he asked. "I do not want to be disturbed", he added in a tone of finality. The reply from the other side was equally compelling, and full of purpose. "Surely you don't think I will begin to bawl out my name, just to satisfy you. Open the door, and soon enough you would know who I am."

The bandit who had been worrying me, seemed, here, to recognise the voice. He put his right hand into his pocket, then he opened the door a little. Immediately, a man forced his way in. The new-comer was shorter in stature, but very powerfully built, more full of purpose, far more calm and cool. With his back to the open doorway, he stood facing the other, who had retreated to the middle of the room, nearer to where I was standing, dishevelled from the struggle I had gone through. The new-comer gave me a rapid look: this gave me a kind of comfort, and courage, I hardly know why, except that his entire bearing was different from the vile man who stood a few feet away from me, tense, but determined to assert himself.

(*She pauses, to take breath, looks around, then at the ceiling, and she closes her eyes. Evidently, she is going through a very great nervous strain. She continues bravely, however*).

The new-comer was the first to speak: "You have violated the assignment I gave you. I asked you to station yourself at the door—that outer door. You were to hold it till the end of the operation. Instead, you have been dallying here, it seems, with some filthy intent. But, fortunately, my knock appears to have baulked you of your desire. Am I right?" He looked at me steadily, as though for confirmation.

(*She pauses again, for some seconds, as if out of breath. Her father, and Karno continue to look at her with silent admiration*).

RULLIARAM:

My poor child! Go on; you are a very brave girl.

BIMLA:

I replied: "He has been torturing me with his hands, and his foul breath."

NEW-COMER:

(*Looking steadily at the other with deadly eyes*). When you came in with us, I told you very clearly you will have to remember two things. You seem to have forgotten both. So listen again. When you hunt with my pack, you treat women with respect; children with affection; and you give me immediate obedience, whatever the circumstances. I find you guilty on both counts. Now get out, and wait for me in the outer courtyard, with the rest of the boys.

KARNO:

Good Lord! Was there a fight?

BIMLA:

Yes. The ruffian did not move. When the new-comer spoke now, he had a slight drawl, which seemed to carry the icy touch of death. "You think you can impose upon me", he said. "You seem to assume I wouldn't want to burden myself, here, with a dead body, or a man put out of business with a serious wound. So you press me for a showdown. Sure, boy, sure. Anything to oblige a friend like you. Now make a move; be quick. I want to wind up here, and get back to our transport."

(*Again she paused for a while*).

KARNO:

You are a brick, Bimla: you are wonderful. Look how closely you observed the happenings around you, when another girl in your place would have been demented with terror. Go on, please.

BIMLA:

The ruffian, too, spoke calmly in reply. "I have told you I do not want to be disturbed. If you will not leave me in peace, when I speak as a friend, you invite me to......speak with my...." He paused, to give effect to what he had said, I suppose. All the time I was watching his right hand, which he had casually put into his pocket, before he opened the door. At last I saw it move quickly.

But the other man's gun spoke first, to deadly effect. The rebel bandit shivered from head to foot. A patch of red appeared under the outer end of his collar bone; and his right hand hung by his side, limp and loose. Gradually, he sank on his feet, just where he stood. The other, who seemed to be the Boss of the gang, called in one of his men. "Prepair to leave", he said. "Make some arrangement for carrying this carcase. We cannot leave him here. I don't think he will die. I have taken care to that effect. We shall have to hide him, until the wound heals". Then the Boss of the outfit turned to me.

(She paused, and searched the face of her father, and the young man. In the eyes of both she read amazement, admiration, pride. Then she went on).

He said: "I am very sorry for the trouble this swine has given you. Had I known him on this side of his character, I wouldn't have let him come in with us. I am in a hurry at the moment. I hope you understand. But I will come back, one of these days—not as a bandit, but as a friend. I have one or two things to explain, to satisfy mine own mind. For the present, however, I beg to take leave."

(She paused again, took a deep breath, then went on).

By this time the wounded man had been carried away, and now the Boss walked calmly out of the room. From the courtyard the sound of some whispers came to me; some shuffling of feet—then a deep silence, and a deep sense of peace in my mind, as gradually I realised that the worst was over.

RULLIARAM

You are wonderful, my child; simply wonderful. I had never imagined you were so brave and fearless. Karno, what do you say?

KARNO:

I am amazed at the way she kept her head. She even tried to defy the whole outfit, by her attempt to tear off the mask from the face of one gunman. Had she succeeded, she would have been immediately shot dead.

BIMLA:

The most important thing, however, is an impression I had, soon after one of the gunmen started making love to me. It occurred to me I had seen him somewhere before. I felt there was something familiar in his voice, his manner, his build. I was puzzled. But it is very curious that a brain wave came to me, like a flash of lightning, subsequently, when the police officer was taking down my statement. The first thing to be remembered about this officer is that he, too, was perfectly silly in regard to me, the same way as the gunman who had to be shot by the Boss. When recording my statement, he got everybody else to clear out. I told him about my impression, that one of the gunmen had struck me as if he were Thakur Jaswant Singh, one of the headmen in our own village. He received this part of my statement with a sudden start, as if he had been hit unexpectedly between the eyes. What puzzles me, more than anything else, in these most unfortunate events, is the fact, as far as I have been able to see, that the Police Inspector did not take down this part of my eye-witness account.

(Rulliaram and Karno are dumbfounded, when they hear Bimla say that one of the gunmen was Thakur Jaswant Singh; and that the investigating police officer had not taken down this part of her evidence—in fact that he had shown a measure of uneasiness, on account of this surmise on his part).

KARNO:

Both points appear to be of the utmost importance. Why was the Inspector unwilling to see their value. They can be of immense help in tracing the culprits.

RULLIARAM:

If one of the gunmen was Thakur Jaswant of our own village, it would mean he was a comparatively new-comer in this particular gang.

KARNO:

It would also mean there is some relationship between this Police Inspector and Thakur Jaswant. Evidently, the Inspector is trying to shield Jaswant Singh. But why? Are they relatives,

close or distant? Or, does the Inspector get a share of the loot from Jaswant? This kind of thing is not unknown. In the days of the Wild West in U.S.A., this kind of arrangement was fairly common between gangsters and sheriffs.

RULLIARAM:

That seems clear enough. No room for doubt. But, then, what should we do?

KARNO:

This part of Bimla's evidence should be on the police file comprising the investigation of this case. The unwillingness of the Police Officer to get it down on the record, is a point of extreme importance. Moreover, if we fail to get it on the police record, at this stage, it shall loose a great deal of its value, when we raise the point at some subsequent stage. In fact, we might find ourselves in trouble, for withholding important evidence from the police.

RULLIARAM:

Another curious thing is that the whole case seems to have been placed in cold storage of some kind. Apparently, the investigation seems to have run into some blind alley. But, why? Especially when the police has, as yet, hardly made any serious effort to investigate properly.

BIMLA:

Father, you have summed up the situation very nicely. The police doesn't seem to care whether the investigation leads to anything, or it doesn't. They gave a severe beating to some of the village oafs. They have extracted as much money as they could from a number of people they roped in for interrogation; and having done these two things to their satisfaction, they have pulled back their tantacles; they have ridden back to the police station where they belong. The investigation file of the case will now remain conveniently buried somewhere among the papers, except for lucrative, occasional dusting; or to keep up a semblance of activity, on the part of the personnel at the post. For the rest, life would go on very much the same as before.

KARNO:

Yes, that is the worst part of the national tragedy in every walk of life. Everything is rotten to the core. Corruption everywhere. For the poor people, no peace; no justice; especially for the uneducated rural communities. Out of their hard-earned wages, they must allow themselves to be fleeced occasionally, on one pretext, or another, by the police, and the revenue officials. When the poor peasant goes to the market, to buy or sell anything, he is defrauded in various ways, at every turn. Adulteration of food stuffs takes place on a scale an honest man cannot even imagine. But no one feels the slightest concern over this deplorable state of affairs, since practically everyone in the official set-up thrives on this corruption. But what is the use of our talking like this? Take the case of this decoity. Unoffending people like your father, and yourself, have been victimised. You are one of the most important eye-witnesses. You have evidence which pinpoints one of the gunmen concerned. But the bright investigating officer ignores the most vital part of the witness, just because it does not suit some private purpose of his own. This action on his part has forced you into a position where you have to accept this decision, that he would ignore the most important part of your evidence, or run many kinds of grave personal risks, to get it on the file. In any case, Bimla, you are wonderful—simply wonderful.

BIMLA:

But the question is, what should we do now, especially in regard to the most vital clue in my evidence, which the investigating officer has ignored altogether?

KARNO:

For the present, I have no idea on the point. But I have a friend in town—a lawyer bloke, very sharp, and very noble. I will run upto town, sometime tomorrow, to get his advice. I must take leave now. I will call tomorrow, to let you know what I gather from the advice of this lawyer friend.

ACT TWO SCENE THREE

(Residence of John S. Gilbert, Director of Consultant Engineers, in New Delhi. The day is very hot; the air full of humidity. But the compact building is fully air-conditioned. Sunk deep in heavily cushioned chairs, Gilbert and Forester are sipping their coffee, after a very good dinner. But there is a look of a kind of heaviness on the faces of both, as if they were stuck in the mud, unable to move quickly; in a charged atmosphere; short of words for what they desired to say; fidgeting in their seats.)

GILBERT:

How is Solomon?

FORESTER:

Much the same as usual. He is drawing up a schedule for his leave of two months, expected to come through in a few days. He has a funny idea. Says he would very much like to join some expedition going up the Everest, in search of the Abominable Snowman. He is a very good mountaineer, you know. In fact he has a number of first rate qualifications. He is something of a miracle with firearms—shotgun, rifle, revolver—a deadshot with all. But he says his weapon, really, is a stengun. Cool as cucumber. Just the kind suitable for secret service, on dangerous jobs. It is a great pity he has reduced himself to a bundle of nerves on our China policy. In fact on our entire foreign policy, in most of its aspects, he is well-nigh a total loss.

GILBERT:

I am afraid the number of these constitutional doubters, or objectors, is rather on the increase. The best way to deal with them is to let them be; to ignore them, under a cloak of toleration. You don't want to argue with them. Argument only tends to make them obstinate. They have to be redeemed with toleration and patience. We must always bear in mind that increase in their number, beyond a certain point, is likely to develop into a national danger.

FORESTER:

From the military point, he says, the rebellion in Tibet has

been a ghastly failure. He fails to perceive that the political aims at the back of the venture may have been far more important in the eyes of those who planned the operation. He concedes these political aims have been achieved, almost to the point of perfection. But he argues what many observers take to be a brilliant stroke of policy, in fact, is no more than a moral bankruptcy, of virtually the worst type, since it only turns a human being into a mere brute, fighting like a fiend, without any sense of morality, or ethics, in the motivations which dominate his mind and actions.

GILBERT:

That is really a pity. I am afraid we shall have to give him up as a bad job. Matters of high policy cannot be abandoned because some people, with diseased minds, are not prepared to approve. Take this rebellion. It has failed to instal at Lhasa a government to our liking. But India, under Nehru's leadership, came right into the venture, knowing all the hazards involved—which means, if it means anything at all, that the doctrine of *Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai* has been destroyed at the roots. India has thrown itself into a military posture, which is a posture of military confrontation against Communist China. This is entirely to our advantage, to an extent beyond our dreams, when we began to work out the plan on the merest tentative basis. In alliance with India, against China, we regain all the strategic advantages the West had lost when Britain scuttled her empire in India. Now we have provided ourselves with a valid basis for providing New Delhi with a total military, naval, and air umbrella against our greatest enemy in Asia and Africa. This is the stupendous gain accruing to us from the military adventure into which India allowed itself to be entangled. When a nation is responsible for maintaining world peace, it cannot afford to be guided, always, by the moral scruples of conscientious fools. Let us leave Solomon free to find the Abominable Snowman, and cultivate his friendship. Let him go and live permanently above the snowline, if he likes.

FORESTER:

What is going to be our immediate line for the future?

GILBERT:

We must keep hammering at the wedge we have driven between India and China. The cleavage must be carefully guarded, to become final, perpetual, everlasting. With these aims in view, we shall have to maintain a close watch on the mind of the political leaders in India. We must also be prepared to pay the price they demand, in the form of aid, for a variety of development plans, to build up the military and economic potential of India. This would enable us to save the lives of American boys, in millions, when the time comes to settle our account with China. Another big thing being attempted is a similar wedge between Moscow and Peking. Here, as well, we are having an appreciable measure of success. But that is not a question you and I have to worry about.

FORESTER:

No, of course not. I cannot help feeling this grand design of our global strategy has a wonderful sweep. If it succeeds, China is most effectively bottled up. But what about Japan? If the Japanese linked up with China, the two could work up a pretty awkward situation for us.

GILBERT:

I shouldn't think that point is being neglected. The American secret service is not what it used to be, even at the end of World War II. It is no longer an amateurish affair. It is a giant Octopus; it moves silently, at supersonic speeds, when necessary. It never leaves even a single pinhead on the globe out of its pragmatic planning. Let us wait, till all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle fall into place—and then, suddenly, one of these days, there would be no first rate Power left in the world, apart from the U.S.A., and its White allies. As the situation works itself out, the coloured people shall be herded up, impotent, in areas of no value, quite as if all this had been done under a system of strict apartheid. But let us not begin to count our chickens before they are hatched. Of course, we don't want to be complacent. But there is hardly any need for anxiety, at any point, where a threat might develop to jeopardise our interests. The Dalai Lama will live in peace, in

Dera Dun, or any other hill station in India, he himself might fancy, or the Government of India might come to fancy for him. This important point is securely settled, with all implications, to our advantage. Any other point you might be wanting to touch?

FORESTER:

No, nothing for the present, except a minor question about Pakistan. Is there any change in our usual line when discussing anything to do with that country, in the course of our contacts with the political leaders in India?

GILBERT:

No change, either in fact or in our political stance, when Pakistan might happen to crop up in a conversation. You can safely keep it up that U.S.A.'s number one friend and ally is India; that we are not worrying much about Pakistan, since we are sure we have got that country, Government and the people, just where we want them.

FORESTER:

Quite so; oh yes. That is quite true, of course.

GILBERT:

However, I have a forecast to make in regard to Pakistan. Normally we don't take any notice when political leaders in Pindi, Dacca, Karachi or Lahore, begin to talk big, and start attitudanising before us, and the rest of the world, as if they could dictate to us on our global policies; as if they were our moral mentors. That kind of talk doesn't mean a thing to us. We ignore it altogether. But, personally, I am beginning to wonder that some sort of change in our general attitude towards Pakistan might soon become a pressing need. It strikes me sometimes that they are beginning to suffer from a swelled head. We might have to cut them down to their proper size. It will have to be done, one of these days: the only question is 'when'.

FORESTER:

That is my impression too.

GILBERT:

In any case we don't have to worry about it just yet. For us the old attitude still holds good. By the way, of course, you must have realised that we don't want to open our mind, unnecessarily, when discussing things with Solomon, since you have found he is not a safe bet on our foreign policy.

FORESTER:

Oh yes, I have become very careful in that respect. In everything else, though, he remains a likable person. I don't think any change is necessary in my personal relations with him.

GILBERT:

No, not at all. (*He rises thoughtfully to his feet, and holds out his hand*). I think we can say that will be all for tonight. Goodluck!

FORESTER:

(*Warmly shaking hands*) Goodluck, and Goodnight!

(*He goes out, and saunters, slowly, to his big car*).

ACT THREE SCENE ONE

(The sun has set. Darkness is coming on. Karan Singh and his father are wending their way to the residence of the friend Karano had said he had in town—a young lawyer, Balwantraj, who is rising rapidly in his profession; also in public esteem, as a sincere social worker, with sound political views, a healthy vision, and simple, sincere ways).

GANGU:

Lawyers in our country, anyway, are generally rigid, and standoffish. Don't you think you are presuming too much, when you call him a friend. From my appearance—old clothes, old, worn-out shoes, covered all over with dust—he may not like me sitting in his office, among people much better placed in life.

KARANO:

No, father; he is neither rigid nor standoffish. He is amazingly simple and sincere. When he accepts a man, he does so without reservations. I think he has really accepted me as a friend. The two of us have talked about things a very great deal. He likes me for my keen study, as he calls it, of the rural conditions and problems. I think he values my opinion on rural problems. He says India's destiny lies in the villages, and we often talk on this subject. I am sure you would like him. I have no doubt he would like you, and respect you, even as much as I do myself. Standoffish people do not congregate around him; nor does he go out of his way, to meet them. As far as I myself have been able to observe, it is a mystery how only people of the right sort are seen moving around him. But he is not exclusive in his social contacts—in friendship, yes, perhaps; but not in the ordinary social courtesies, when a man mixes with fellow human beings. With the right sort of people, in time, these contacts often ripen into friendship. But if I try to describe him for you, it would take me a long time to complete the picture. You

will presently be able to see for yourself, because here we are.

(He knocks at a door, on the left. It is opened without delay, and he passes in, followed by his father. They are in a courtyard, with a verandah on the left, where a young man is sitting in one of a number of chairs, ranged along the wall, facing the courtyard. He rises eagerly to meet the father and son).

BALWANT:

Hallo, my dear Karan Singh! It is very good that you have come today. (*Shakes hands with Karan Singh*).

KARANO:

This is my father, Ganga Singh. In the village, he is usually spoken of as Old Gangu.

(The lawyer shakes Gangu warmly by the hand, his eyes lit up with joy. He is of medium height, medium build; strong and regular, chiselled features. The lines on his face, forehead, and chin, indicate a strength of mind. Neither a visionary, nor a gross man of the world. There is something in his make-up which defies description, except that you call it some spiritual quality, pending the time when you find some more suitable word for it. His dress is quiet, inobtrusive, but neat and clean. There is a light in his eyes, and a smile on his lips, which you find very disarming. A touch of reverence comes into his manner when he extends his hand to Gangu).

BALWANT:

Very glad to meet you, Sir. Knowing Karan Singh as I do, I have been looking forward to the honour of meeting you some day.

GANGU:

The honour is mine. My son is full of praise for you; and I am very happy to find he has been lucky to win the friendship of a fine young man like you. Speaking in general, the educated people of urban areas do not think much of the simple, backward people of the rural communities.

BALWANT:

I am afraid, Sir, what you say is only too true. The gulf between the rural and urban populations is one of our major problems. It must be bridged. The rural population forms the real backbone of the country; we cannot afford to leave it inert. I hope some day, soon, I shall have an opportunity to discuss the subject fully, with you and Karan Singh. I have had a glimpse of his mind on this problem; I find his quiet views are sound and very interesting. I tell you he knows more about the problem, from his studies on the spot, than I do, after all I have read in the books. That is one reason I call myself lucky in having him as one of my friends. When you really get him to talk, he has a way of holding your mind. For today, I have invited a number of my friends, in a kind of informal meeting, to exchange views on another important problem—the rebellion in Tibet, which Peking appears to have thoroughly crushed. But the impact of this event on our own future, needs careful analysis, and a competent adjustment. I welcome you and your son to participate. I am expecting presently the invitees would begin to arrive. (*Knock at the door*) Hallo! Come in, please! Come in! (*Rises, and walks some steps towards the door. About half a dozen young men are seen entering in a bunch*) You are welcome, gentlemen; highly welcome!

(*He becomes one of the group, and shepherds them into the room at the back of the verandah, where chairs have been placed, facing a table, on a small dais, enough to seat about fifty people. Another group arrives; then another; then another; till a few chairs, only, are left unoccupied. Then he rises to his feet*).

ACT THREE SCENE TWO

(*The room where people are taking their seats for the meeting, is, evidently, a lawyers' office. Rows of law-books on the shelves along the four walls, which indicate the status of the owner among lawyers, well placed*

the middle, between topnotchers and the beginners. Furniture seen in the room seems to have been brought in specially, for the purpose of the meeting—light, portable, folding chairs, with back to the wall of the verandah, in five neat rows, with space between the rows to allow easy movement for those going to the stage, or returning from it, with an open margin on the three sides, where the rows end. Facing the rows of chairs is a massive table, with a vase, full of fresh-cut roses. The table is placed on a low dais, big enough to let the speaker stand on it by the side of the table, and a chair for the President.

Many types are represented in the audience. A large number are in shirt and dhoti, with a fair sprinkling of suits or combinations of the Western cut. Most of them are lawyers; some university people—Professors, Lecturers and senior students. A few landowners, a class apart, unnecessarily assertive in manner).

BALWANT:

We are here, gentlemen, nearly all of us. I think we can very well start now.

VOICES:

Yes. Oh yes; let us start.

BALWANT:

May I propose Lala Hikmatram to the chair?

SEVERAL VOICES:

I second the proposal. I support......I........

(Lala Hikmatram takes the chair. He is lean and lanky, with rather a springy step, and piercing eyes. Firm in bearing, but not assertive. He goes straight to the point).

CHAIRMAN:

Gentlemen, I thank you for the honour you have done me. We have assembled here to discuss the rebellion in Tibet, which the Central Communist Government at Peking has put down with complete success. Since Tibet lies directly on the borders of India, whatever happens there is of great interest for us, because it has a close bearing on our future. But before we embark on this dis-

cussion, let us devise some simple procedure for conducting the proceedings. I don't think we can spare time for long orations. I suggest we speak strictly to the point—at the most five minutes for one speaker. The next speaker would be free to make another point, if he wishes to; or he may proceed to refute what has been said before him. If the house agrees, I would call for five names, to set the ball rolling.

SEVERAL VOICES:
We agree........we all agree.

CHAIRMAN:
Thank you, thank you very much. Then let me have five names, to make the first set of speakers. (*Five men rise to their feet, one by one*). Just a moment, gentlemen. Let me get down your names....Mr. Puri; Mr. Nandlal; Mr. Shirma; Mr. Jaganchand and Mr. Murlidhar. So I have the honour to call upon Mr. Puri, to let us have the benefit of his views.

(*Cheers, as the speaker walks to the stage*).

PURI:
Gentlemen, I will not waste your time, more than I can help. I come to the point. About this rebellion in Tibet, which flared up quite suddenly, and then as suddenly collapsed, certain points are taken as fairly well established. Beyond these, there is nothing, except surmise and conjecture, at best; for reliable official information is not available for us—and cannot be. But the established facts are significant; they shed a great deal of light on the dark patches, which enables us to draw certain conclusions. I, therefore, venture to suggest that we concentrate, first and foremost, on aspects of which the veracity seems beyond question. For instance, the base of the rebellion was on a part of Tibet which borders directly on Indian territory, comprising what we call the NEFA. With a request that this important point be duly registered in the mind, I leave the stage for the next speaker—to refute, as succinctly, this significant fact, or proceed to take up some other point, equally well established as the one I have mentioned.

(*He returns to his seat*).

CHAIRMAN:

I have the honour to call upon Mr. Nandlal, to let us have the advantage of his line on the question.

NANDLAL:

Gentlemen, I totally agree with Mr. Puri. The point to which he has drawn the attention of the house is undeniable. Another point, similarly well established, is that the rebellion had a clear measure of initial success. The rebels penetrated into the capital itself, and practically dominated the town for about two days, which made the flight of the Dalai Lama possible. Had the hold of the Communist authorities on Lhasa not been considerably shaken, he would not have been able to slip out, with the comparative ease he did. With just these remarks, I beg leave to return to my seat.

CHAIRMAN:

Gentlemen, before I call upon the next speaker, there is a circumstance which has impressed itself on my mind, and I think I should mention it before you all. In this meeting, the usual cheering, characteristic of meetings of this kind, seems to be lacking. From this I draw a conclusion, which may not equally appeal to you all. To me, it appears to bear an indication of our mind, concentrating itself not on anything frivolous, or unimportant, but a matter which will make or mar the destiny of the country, thrice hallowed, since it is our motherland. The turn this rebellion has given to our own Present and Future is practically a great national tragedy—and that seems, to me, to be the reason why the usual reaction indicated in the form of cheers, has been silently ruled out by our mind as not adequate and proper. All the same, I want you to feel free to raise cheers, or to refrain from doing so, absolutely in keeping with your mood. My remark in this behalf is intended only by the way. I now call upon Mr. Shirma to let us have the advantage of his thinking on the problem in hand.

SHIRMA:

Gentlemen, I fully agree with the Chairman in what he has said in regard to the absence of cheering, or the lukewarm applause, as

the speakers drive home the argument. I also agree with Mr. Puri and Mr. Nandlal. Strung up in the same argument, here is another point, which strikes me as singularly well established. In spite of the considerable measure of initial success, it remained blacked out for the Press here. When news, at last, began to trickle out, it was first flashed in the foreign Press, while the Press in our own country remained mum over it. Our Prime Minister even tried to play down the impression made by reports published in London, for instance. He publicly said these reports were largely exaggerated. But when the rebellion was seen to be making good progress, he began to express satisfaction over it, even though these expressions were rather guarded. When, however, it was clear that the Dalai Lama had made good his escape, Nehru flung all caution to the winds. He finally announced the arrival of the Dalai Lama on Indian territory with a note of triumphant joy. With this, I leave the stage for the next speaker, to agree with me, or proceed to smash my statement.

(*He goes back to his seat*).

CHAIRMAN:

I now call upon Mr. Jaganlal.

JAGANLAL:

Gentlemen, I, too, proceed straight to the point. The simple procedure adopted by the Chairman, for conducting this meeting, is really a wonderful procedure. We are discussing a subject over which we might easily have been angrily shouting at each other. Instead, we are methodically making point after point, in whole-hearted agreement, over a question of the utmost importance, with an almost immeasurable potential for violent controversy. But let me not digress. Allow me to recall to your mind that the feeling of vocal sections of the people in India has never been in doubt. The political party in power, the Indian National Congress, blessed the rebellion in no uncertain terms. The Mahasabha, the Jan Sangh, and all other worth while organisations, have been equally clear where their sympathies were placed. A leader of the foremost rank, Jaiparkash Narayan, has been

openly doing his best, to organise public opinion in support of the rebellion, avowedly all over Asia and Africa. And having placed one brick in position, to build up the basis of this discussion, I beg leave to close my remarks.

(*He goes to resume his seat*).

CHAIRMAN:

Now I have the honour to call upon Mr. Murlidhar.

MURLIDHAR:

Gentlemen, I would request you to note the fact that the Communist Government in China has openly accused Formosa, and the reactionary elements in this country, of having fomented the rebellion, with foreign help. There have been reports in the Press that the rebellion was supplied arms and food by means of airdrops. Neither the U.S.A. nor U.K. have made any secret of their sympathy for the rebels. Further, allow me to state there have been some pronouncements from people of note in Pakistan, which gave expression to a hope that the rebellion, and likely trends in the wake, might persuade India to settle her quarrel with Pakistan, to be better prepared to meet certain eventualities. But Prime Minister Nehru lost no time in drowning such talk in a bucket of cold water. We must also take note of the fact that the Dalai Lama, a rebel against the Central Chinese Government, has been granted asylum in India. This fact is one we cannot lightly dismiss, as of no consequence. It boldly underlines our hostility towards the Chinese Government. With these words, I leave the stage open for the second phase of this discussion.

(*He goes back to resume his seat*).

CHAIRMAN:

Gentlemen, allow me to congratulate you on the decorous manner in which you are discussing a subject prone to degenerate into a violent disagreement, or something even more disorderly. On the points raised so far, there has been an astonishing measure of unanimity of views—namely, points in regard to the rebellion over which there is no possibility of any kind of doubt. No one can defy,

no one can deny the truth of these facts. But beyond the area of these facts, there is a vast field of uncertainties, probabilities, and conjecture. Questions in this field cannot be answered, except by New Delhi, Washington, and London, perhaps. For instance, wherefrom, and how, did the rebels obtain supplies of all kinds, indispensable for pushing a rebellion to victory? Those among you who feel they can answer questions falling in this area, or feel they can ask questions which cannot be answered, may please let me note down their names. (*A number of people rise to their feet*). Thank you; thank you very much. Allow me to take down your names: Mr. Birumal; Mr. Lachmandas; Mr. Brijnath; Mr. Daulatram; and Mr. Thakurdas. Let us proceed with the next phase of the discussion, with these five speakers. At the end, if we find we have more time, we shall prolong the meeting with more speakers. I have now the honour to call upon Mr. Birumal to let us have the benefit of his views.

BIRUMAL:

Gentlemen, the worthy Chairman has raised a very important question. Who provided the rebels with supplies of all kinds, in sufficient quantity, in an area not easily accessible for transit of heavy material? I would venture to suggest that the greater bulk of these supplies, in any case, cannot have been airborne to the base of the rebellion, admittedly on the border of NEFA. In other words, they must have passed through Indian territory...... Without permission from New Delhi? Or with permission, and official blessing? If without permission, then what are we to think about the efficiency of the Indian Intelligence Agencies, which proved to be so blind, they failed to see an operation of this kind being pushed through right under their nose. The passage given to these supplies—was not this a hostile act towards Peking? I submit we cannot run away from this question. Even if supplies were airborne to the base of the rebellion, from Formosa, the proposition we have to accept is rather thin. Formosa is too far away to be a convenient base for these supplies. And now, leaving these awkward questions festering in your mind, to be answered whatever way you like, I beg to close my remarks. (*He goes back to his seat*).

CHAIRMAN:

Next I have the honour to call upon Mr. Lachmandas.

LACHMANDAS:

Gentlemen, much against my own desire, and preference in the matter, I find myself driven, by the pressure of available evidence, to agree with what the previous speakers have said. My own mind is bristling with disturbing questions. For instance, is it possible that the rebellion was prepared by unofficial elements in our country, with necessary help from outside, leaving the Prime Minister in the dark, in his official capacity, anyway? Which were the outside sources? Was Pundit Nehru really ignorant of what was transpiring right under his own nose? Was he really in the dark as to what was brewing in the silent depth of the mountains, across our borders? Or, did he deliberately prefer that events should take a defnite course, so that later he should be in a position to drive a bargain home with U.S.A., so keen on containing Communist China? I cannot answer these questions; and many others, which fall into train, the moment I give serious thought to the problem of our relations with China—a country that has never done any harm to us, or to U.S.A. I would be very happy to find that someone else can answer them, with reason and commonsense. I thank you for the patient hearing you have given me.

(*He bows to the house, and returns to his seat*).

CHAIRMAN:

I now have the honour to call upon Mr. Brijnath to address the house.

BRIJNATH:

Gentlemen, is it only a coincidence, that, as the rebellion began to spread, opinion in U.S.A., in favour of all out aid to India, began to swirl up in mounting waves, even at the risk of grave dissatisfaction in Pakistan, from Vice-President Nixon, to scores of worthy Senators. Some of them now talk of India as an 'ally'. Has India given up its policy of non-alignment? Has India really accepted the position of an 'ally' of U.S.A.? When did this change come? Why? It is a

great tragedy, if India has agreed to become a tool of American imperialism. In the subtle game, being played behind the curtains, who has won? Washington, or New Delhi? U.S.A. is nearly six thousand miles away, but China is our next-door neighbour. Why have we become hostile to our neighbour, at the bidding of a 'friend', an ally, at that great distance from our shores? Had China done us any harm? Who is responsible for turning India into a base for the U.S. fighting forces? Evidently, there is nothing like cold logic for leading an honest man into absolute blind alleys! Thank you, gentlemen. (*He bows to the house, and goes back to his seat*).

CHAIRMAN:

Next I have the honour to call upon Mr. Daulatram.

DAULATRAM:

(*Goes to the stage, slowly, languidly, as if bored stiff. When he speaks, his voice is surprisingly colourless, and insipid*).

My dear friends, I have been listening very patiently, very attentively, to the most pertinent, and incisive, questions raised in regard to the policy of our Government, with respect to China, as revealed by the crucial episode of the rebellion in Tibet. This basic question is important, not only for us in India, it is even more important from the long range point of view of the freedom of Asia, and Africa, from the accursed Anglo-American combine, which, of course, includes all European powers, with possessions, or mandates, or spheres of influence, on these two continents, or the rich islands in the Atlantic and the Pacific. I wish I could answer the questions posed by eminent speakers who have taken part in the discussion so far. I keenly, even painfully, realise that I should destroy the edifice clearly brought to light by the incisive quality of these questions. But if I cannot do that, I have to concede that the Government and the prominent political parties in this country have made the unpardonable blunder of suffering themselves to fall, as tools, in the hands of a resurgent Western imperialism, which now, in fact, is virtually an American imperialism, more than anything else—unless, of course, as the years go by, it

should also turn out to be the first, and the latest, brand of an allied Russian imperialism as well. You find, thus, that I fully realise the immensity of the questions raised. I would strain to the utmost every intellectual faculty, to meet them fairly, and squarely. But I confess I have nothing with which I could hope to refute the quiet commonsense and fearless inquiry brought to bear upon the problem. In the miserable position to which this reasoning and logic reduce me, I find myself confronted by the stark, and highly alarming possibility that India has been guilty of involvement in the Tibetan rebellion, of which the merest suspicion would justify drastic, I should rather say, the most sinister changes in Peking's attitude towards India. With this harrowing confession, I surrender the stage to the next speaker, with a fervent hope and prayer that he would smash the dangerous logic, which I have failed to meet.

(His voice had risen; it had become sharp with a suppressed passion. But when he winded up his remarks, it had again become spiritless and dull).

CHAIRMAN:

I now have the honour to call upon Mr. Thakurdas to let us have the benefit of his line of thought on the subject.

THAKURDAS:

Gentlemen, I regret I find myself very much in the same state of mind as my worthy friend, Mr. Daulatram. We all know—we have known it for a long time—that he has a remarkably languid manner, a languid approach, in everything to which he gives his mind. But I know, by experience, that is only a silly sort of mannerism he has developed, I cannot say whether deliberately, or just by chance. Otherwise, in matters connected with the conscience, his thinking, and his expression, are so hot that he virtually sizzles up opposition of all kinds. I, therefore, beg to be allowed to confine myself to a brief and bare statement that I fully agree with the conclusions he has drawn from the discussion to which we have been listening. I would even add that these conclusions throw a flood of light upon our foreign policy. They expose, without mercy, the extreme idiocy

on which it appears to have been based; and they lay bare the great peril to which this policy is leading us even now—a foolish hostility to Peking, and a humiliating surrender to U.S.A., a shameful willingness to work as tools in American hands, providing them with naval, military, and air bases, for holding Asia in subjection with a revised imperial technique. With these bitter words, my dear friends, I close my remarks.

(*Goes back to his seat*).

CHAIRMAN:

It is my unhappy privilege, gentlemen, to wind up the proceedings of this meeting, with one or two remarks I feel I must make. May I assume I have your permission to pester you with my views to that extent?

VOICE FROM THE FAR END OF THE ROOM:

You are doing yourself a great injustice, Sir, when you make use of that expression. You will not be pestering us with your views. I am sure the house, with one voice, repudiates the expression you have used. We are all very eager to hear your views; and we shall all be very grateful for the precise assessment you will give.

ANOTHER VOICE:

I deem it an honour to associate myself with the statement of my worthy friend. Kindly proceed.

SEVERAL VOICES:

Yes, Sir. We are all very eager to get the benefit of your opinion. With the utmost vehemence, we repudiate the word 'pester' when you apply it to assess the value we attach to your views. Please proceed to guide us to a proper grasp of the situation we find developing around us, at home and abroad, right in front of our eyes.

CHAIRMAN:

Thank you, gentlemen; thank you very much. Here is my analysis, for all it is worth. In the first place, it is very curious

that throughout this meeting, there has really been no clapping of hands, or any other kind of noisy outward applause. We have listened to the speakers in pindrop silence, as if weighed down by a deepening sense of tragedy, or a feeling of shame and humiliation, over the subject under discussion. This silent reception of the speeches was not planned. I feel, therefore, I am fully justified when I say this mood of the house is very significant.

A VOICE:

Yes, Sir, you are right. This mood has a deeper meaning of great import.

CHAIRMAN:

To the best of my knowledge, none of us present here is a regular member of any political party. Most of us belong to the legal profession. Naturally, as intelligent citizens, we are deeply interested in the prevailing social and political conditions, in the prevailing political situation. But this interest is not of the fervid kind, characteristic of the attitude of political leaders. That is why this meeting does not form part of any political campaign.

A VOICE:

No, Sir. Thank heaven we are not political leaders. May the good Lord save us from our political leaders! I beg your pardon for the interruption. Go on, please.

CHAIRMAN:

Thank you, Sir, for your kind and timely endorsement of the point I was seeking to make. So I proceed with what I was saying. Now this meeting has been very well attended. I believe almost all invited to participate are here. From this I conclude the surpassing importance of the problem is widely appreciated.

VOICE FROM THE FAR CORNER:

Quite true; that is quite true. Even the poorest wretch, going hungry in the streets, has an uncanny feeling he is being sold, several times over, either to enrich, or to satisfy the personal vanities of these leaders. I am sorry I held you up. Please go ahead.

CHAIRMAN:

Gentlemen, please allow me to add this meeting has brought to light a surprisingly happy extent of the identity of views, among the thinking people, not interested in politics as a profession, so to say; or as a means for securing privileges easily convertible into hard cash. Views expressed in this meeting are of great importance, since they are sincere, and straight. They furnish a base, if at all we come to feel the situation lays on our shoulders a sacred duty to the country we dare not ignore without turning traitors in the eyes of God....a base for urgent work, if we desire to save, at least our own conscience, by doing our bit without flinching.

VOICES:

A very good base; a wonderful base. You have sounded the call of duty. We assure you we shall not lag behind.

CHAIRMAN:

Gentlemen, your response to the call of duty is something solemn and sacred between you and your Lord, the Almighty God. I know it is not prompted by considerations of economic or political gains. But to go back to the implications of the Tibetan rebellion, I have to confess that I, too, have no answer for the questions of stupendous import raised here, in regard to the foreign policy of the Government of India.

A VOICE:

(*Pleading, but full of bitterness*) Pardon me, Sir; allow me to correct you on this point. Our Government at New Delhi has no foreign policy. We get instructions, maybe, they are called suggestions, in official parlance, or something else, equally misleading in regard to their intent. We are expected to accept these instructions, or suggestions, and the bandwagon remains accordingly on the move. I don't call this a foreign policy. I call it dutiful obedience.

CHAIRMAN:

Well, let us not quarrel over words. Let us call it dutiful obedience to......to........

A VOICE:

To our foreign masters, if at all we desire to be honest about it.

CHAIRMAN:

O.K, let us call it dutiful obedience to our foreign masters. Gentlemen, I would even go a step further, and say, in the eyes of History, as written by dispassionate historians, Prime Minister Nehru, I fear, will appear to have plotted his own ruin; ruin of the party of which he is the leader; and ruin of the country he is doing his best to serve. While in the grip of some wayward, boyish, vainglorious impulse, he has allowed himself to be persuaded that he, as Prime Minister of India, is the legal and rightful heir, also to the greatness and glory of the British Empire in India—of which Tibet, for a long time, has been almost a subject province.

VOICES:

Good Lord! How preposterous! How incredible, but how true! That is Nehru all over. However, continue please, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN:

Unfortunately, to cut the story short, there have been, and still are, people around him, who seem to have carefully nursed this absurd conceit. So, one fine morning he awoke to find he had powerful contacts abroad, for the merest asking who would provide money and material for him, to get a good grip over Lhasa. It very much seems to appear this is how the rebellion came to be planned. But Mao mastered the situation, and made us all look such utter and sublime fools.

VOICES:

You are right, Sir; you are right.

CHAIRMAN:

Gentlemen, kindly allow me to proceed. I will not detain you long. I am coming soon to the end of these remarks. From the point when this rebellion burst out, Nehru naturally seems to have

been a willing tool, in the hands of Uncle Sam, and his CIA.

VOICES:

Yes. The CIA....The Invisible Government....that can drive even the President of U.S.A. to paths he had never dreamt he would blithely be pursuing one day.

CHAIRMAN:

Just a couple of minutes more, gentlemen, and I shall finish.

VOICES:

Certainly....Certainly, Mr. Chairman; take as long as you like. Thank God you have opened our eyes.

CHAIRMAN:

To save the precious lives of American boys, let Nehru provide the cannon-fodder for beating China. This is how we have happened to slip into a position, in the eyes of the world, which does not do us much credit. Nehru, the great freedom fighter, has lived to mortally injure the freedom of Asia, also of Africa, by providing indispensable bases for imperialists, on Asiatic soil, in Asiatic waters, in places of the greatest strategic importance. I am afraid, gentlemen, this is enough, for one day. There is hardly need for me to say more. So I declare the meeting closed.

(The meeting breaks up. Some people crowd round the Chairman. Others divide into groups of various sizes, moving slowly in the direction of the exit, talking in subdued tones. The burden of the remarks is "What, then, should we do?" At the end of a few minutes, only the Chairman, Balwantraj, Karan Singh, and his father are left in the room).

HIKMATRAM:

In view of the success of this meeting, and the abyss into which our foreign policy has fallen, the matter should not be left at the point to which the meeting has led us. I feel something must be done, to bring to an end the policy of military confrontation with China, and save the country from the consequences of this folly. At the moment, however, I have no idea how we can do this. I propose to let the problem simmer in my mind for some time, about a week,

or something like that. When anything occurs to me, I would get into touch with you; and I would suggest you also do the same. With these remarks, I take leave for the present.

(He rises to his feet, and moves to the exit, accompanied by Balwantraj. At the door, they shake hands, and Hikmatram goes out. Balwantraj puts the chain on, and walks back to Karan Singh and his father).

BALWANT:

(Looking at his watch).

My dear Karan Singh, I am free now. If there is anything you desire to take up with me, I am at your service. But let us go into the dining-room. We must have something to eat—just whatsoever might happen to be available, afterwards a cup of tea. Then we can talk till the cows come home. We can talk during the meal as well.

(He opens a door, and leads his guests into the adjoining room, wherefrom he dives through a door, and disappears, shouting back over his shoulder).

Half a minute, old boy; let me go in, and see how the land lies.

ACT THREE SCENE THREE

(Gangu takes a chair at the table, and Karan Singh seats himself opposite his father. The dining table would accommodate about two dozen people, at a pinch. The sideboard, on one side, shows a load of plates and dishes, of the ordinary run and range. Balwantraj, it appears, is a sane and modest sort of man, fairly well off, but not keen on displaying his prosperity to each and all. Does not seem to bother about appearances, though he maintains an admirable standard of cleanliness in everything. Old Gangu and his son have been roving their eyes over various things in the room, and have been looking at the ceiling, when Balwant comes back,

and takes his seat at the head of the table, with the old man on his right, Karan Singh on his left.)

BALWANT:

We are in luck. We shall not have to starve. We shall have a plentiful meal, but vegetarian. You know, old boy, that I don't belong to any particular school in such matters. Myself I am neither a vegetarian, nor a non-vegetarian. When there is meat at the table, I relish it. But when it is not, I don't pine for it. May I ask if Pitaji is particular in these things?

KARAN SINGH:

In our village, the Rajputs are non-vegetarians, and the same applies to father and myself.

(*The servant places two steaming dishes on the table, and plates in front of his master and his guests*).

BALWANT:

Let us go ahead. Karno, my boy, you must look after Pitaji. What would you have, Sir, to begin with? Please make yourself perfectly at home. I deem it a great honour to serve you as a host.

(*Strangely enough, old Gangu is not in the least, nervous, or embarrassed. It is the first time he is having a meal at a table, entirely different from the way he has been eating all his life, in his own poor and simple home. But his quiet sense of dignity and self-respect comes to his help. His behaviour and attitude during the meal is strikingly free from self-consciousness*).

BALWANT:

Come on, Karan Singh. You can begin now, if you like.

KARAN SINGH:

About three weeks ago, a party of armed dacoits raided the house of Rulliaram, the goldsmith in our village. During the time when other members of the gang were ransacking the house, one of them was making a fool of himself, with overtures to the daughter of the goldsmith, a young girl, gifted with an extraordinary commonsense and courage. The gunmen wore a mask. While this ruffian was molesting the girl, she got the impression that there was

something in his voice, manner and appearance, which made her feel she had seen him somewhere. In a fit of foolhardy courage, and a desperate resolve, she tried to tear off the mask, which enfuriated the gunman. But before he had a chance to inflict any injury on her, there was a knock at the door, which the ruffian had fastened on the inside, before he started to make approaches to the girl. He ignored the knock for some seconds; it was repeated with a more imperious insistence. The door was then opened, and the gunman who came in seemed to be the Boss of the outfit. He immediately took the other to task, for disobedience, and for molesting a woman. In his own eyes, personally, he said, both were unpardonable offences. But the first gunman was defiant, ready for a showdown. She had watched his right hand slipping unobtrusively into the right side hip pocket of the jacket he had on. When that hand moved in the pocket, the Boss proved to be quicker; he shot the rebel in the shoulder, who shivered from head to foot, then sank down where he stood, right arm hanging by his side, loose and limp. Soon after, the gunmen cleared out, carrying away whatever of value, they had happened to find, with the bunch of keys they had snatched from the poor old goldsmith, and the wounded member of the gang. (*He paused, studying the face of his friend*).

BALWANT:

Go on; go on.

KARAN SINGH:

I hope I am not boring you.

BALWANT:

Not at all. Don't be silly. The story is very interesting. What I want to suggest is only this that you give part of your mind to the meal as well.

KARAN SINGH:

Make your mind easy on that score. I am doing very well on this delicious dal and bhaji. Allow me to proceed with the story. In the afternoon a police party pitched itself on the village. Some of the village yokels were rounded up, and given a severe beating.

The investigating officer asked for eye-witnesses to be produced before him. There were only two: the old goldsmith, and his daughter. In the whole village, there was no one else who had seen or heard anything. The goldsmith, in his place, was no good. He only knew that he was beaten, and his bunch of keys snatched from him. He knew nothing more.

BALWANT:

That is very strange. A gang of gunmen raid the village; but when the police begins investigation, it is found there are no eye-witnesses, apart from the immediate victims—the goldsmith, and his young daughter. What kind of a statement did she give?

KARAN SINGH:

Her statement was remarkable—coherent, and to the point. She told the officer that something in the voice, manner and appearance of the gunman, who molested her, gave her a feeling that she had seen him somewhere before. But she could not recollect where. Then an idea flashed in her mind, and she felt sure he was Thakur Jaswant, one of the headmen in our own village. When the investigating officer heard this, he gave a violent start, and did not take down this part of her statement. Why did he not care to see that this was a solid clue, worth following?

BALWANT:

The answer is clear enough. For some unknown reason he wishes to shield Jaswant. Maybe, he is a relative of the police officer; or the two are in league, on a share basis of the spoils.

KARAN SINGH:

That is my impression, too. Evidently, this part of her statement should be on the investigation file, from this very stage. How can we ascertain whether the officer has taken it down, or not? If he has not, it would be our duty to take the clue to some higher authority. What do you think we should do?

BALWANT:

Wait a bit. Let me think. You have brought a pretty difficult proposition.

KARAN SINGH:

From what the Boss of the outfit said to the rebel gunman, the young lady thinks Jaswant is not a regular member of this gang. She remembers almost the exact words used by the Boss: "When you hunt with my pack, you give me immediate, implicit obedience; you treat women with respect; children with affection." In the light of this remark, it appears Jaswant was working with this gang only on a temporary basis of some kind.

BALWANT:

Yes, from the facts as given by you, these conclusions flow easily. What is not clear is just what we should do in regard to the important clue, which seems to establish the identity of one of the outlaws. This was a deliberate act on his part. In this way he put the investigation off the rails. Now what should we do to put it back on the track? At the moment I have no clear idea. Let me thinkit over for some time, and consult one or two friends. Have you any objection to that?

KARAN SINGH:

No, not I. But I do not know what the young girl or her father would say.

BALWANT:

Oh, you poor babe! You know nothing, about anything. I have a kind of hunch the young lady and her father would only be too glad to abide by your advice, in this, and many other things. Where are your wits, young man? Where are your wits?

(*Karan Singh says nothing, but stares hard at his lawyer friend. Old Gangu watches the faces of both, alternately*).

BALWANT:

Now for a cup of tea. You have kept my mind occupied with your problem. That has not helped to put me in the best light as a host. It does not matter about you; but I should have looked better after your father. Do you like tea, Pitaji? Many people say the bally thing has extended its empire into the rural areas as well.

GANGU:

To tell you the truth, on cold nights, I often take a glass at home. I make it myself; or the boy makes it for me, usually with *gur*, instead of white sugar. I enjoy it, sipping slowly, after getting into bed.

BALWANT:

Look, Karano, my boy! Don't you see? Pitaji is something of a poet. When the night is very cold, he enjoys sipping it slowly, after getting into bed. It seems such a pity, sir, you did not take to writing poetry at the proper time. (*The old man smiles happily. Balwant calls out for his servant*) Badri, remove the plates, and bring us some tea.

BADRI:

Yes, sir. (*He removes the plates and dishes*). The tea is ready. I'll be back in a minute.

BALWANT:

Good boy! Bring it along quick. See it is properly brewed. Today I have a special guest to entertain. See that you don't let me down.

BADRI:

I assure you, sir, I have done my very best.

BALWANT:

Excellent. Bring it quick. Karano, my dear friend, has any bright idea come to you?

KARANO:

No; nothing has occurred to me. (*Badri comes in with a tray. He places the tea on the table, with three cups, then disappears in silence*).

BALWANT:

Think hard, my dear fellow, while I pour out for you. (*He puts a little sugar into the teapot, stirs it vigorously with a teaspoon, then leaves it to brew some more*).

GANGU:

(*Looking thoroughly alive and young*) What a nice smell!

BALWANT:

We call it flavour, sir. Pitaji, you are wonderful. In taste and breeding, you would easily beat our generation. (*Reverently puts a cup before him; another before Karano; and one before himself. Draws in a long breath, before taking a sip, then he closes his eyes in sheer enjoyment*).

KARANO :

Beginning to feel sleepy?

BALWANT:

I am in the seventh heaven—not sleepy. Quite in ecstasy, I should say. This Badri is a good boy. Hasn't let me down over this tea, anyway. I am very glad to see Pitaji enjoying it in silence. In Japan, for the benefit of foreigners, what they call the 'Tea Ceremony', the rule is to sip in silence. During the formal sitting for this ritual, they don't chatter, like I am doing now. But today I am very happy. I don't mind admitting that.

KARANO:

Any special reason, if I am not too inquisitive?

BALWANT:

More than one. But I do not want to spoil it, by having to tell you all about it. When you were a toddler, lisping around the knees of Pitaji, I wish you had given him leisure, to bring out the poet in him.

KARANO:

Has father really been such a great success with you?

BALWANT:

If you mean am I as happy to have met him as I look, you are right. He represents the stirling worth of a generation now going extinct: a generation of genuine human beings, with a sense of dignity. At the social and political plane, we must reproduce the

qualities of that generation, if at all we desire to give depth and durability to our institutions. Have you never felt there is something shallow, and ephermal, in our thoughts and actions……… even more so, in our motivations. Self-interest, pure and simple, is our sole criterion in everything. National issues, and humanitarian grounds, are mere blinds, in the generations after Pitaji's young days. At the back of these blinds, everybody works only for himself. We seldom bother about moral values. But without these values, human society deteriorates: it descends to the level of a mere brute, armed with the most deadly weapons, ostensibly for defence, in fact for killing his enemies, without the least compunction or remorse. In our generation, we are interested only in money, amassed in the shortest possible time, to be enjoyed with dames. But let me return to sanity. Why did I begin to inflict this sermon on you and Pitaji?……Yes, oh yes; I remember. I was endeavouring to convey to you that there is an extreme dearth of human beings in our society. (*He pauses for a while. Gangu turns the pause to his own advantage*).

GANGU:

Karno, my boy, don't you think we should now make a move?

KARANO:

Indeed we should. Oh yes, Pitaji; we must dash off. (*Looking at Balwant*) I know you would not allow me to utter a single word of thanks. All the same……you know……

BALWANT:

Oh yes, I know a lot more than you do, in regard to many things. But that is neither here nor there. Bring Pitaji when you come next. In fact bring him along, every time you come yourself.

KARANO:

I certainly will. Every time he expresses a desire to come. (*They rise from the table, shake hands, say good-bye, then father and son go out*).

ACT THREE SCENE THREE

Night, dark and cloudy, with a sharp wind, blowing in squals. The street in front of the goldsmith's house is deserted. Inside, Rulliaram and his daughter are in the room adjoining the workshop. Rulliaram has been smoking thoughtfully for the last half hour, or so. Bimla has been busy, with her sewing basket in front. Both have been silently waiting for Karan Singh, and the advice he was to bring from his lawyer friend in town. The door connecting the workshop with the room at the back, has been left open, not to miss the soft knock of Karan Singh, when it came. They are almost giving up hope, when a footfall comes to their ears from the street. It stopped opposite the door of the workshop, then the soft knock father and daughter had been waiting for. Rulliaram responds to it, speaking softly himself, and opens the door. Karan Singh slips in, and both come into the room where Bimla is sitting, head bent forward over her sewing. For half a second she raises her eyes, a sweet but faint smile playing round the corners of her lips. Rulliaram returns to his seat on the charpai, and invites Karano to sit by his side.

KARANO:

Thanks. (*Sits down, rather gingerly, on an edge of the charpai*).

RULLIARAM:

No, no; that is not the way to sit. Don't be so formal; make yourself comfortable; pull up your legs. For the second week of February, it is rather a cold tonight.

KARANO:

Yes, it is: cold, and cloudy. Walking back from town, father and I, all the way, were afraid the rain might come any minute. But luckily it held back.

RULLIARAM:

(*Surprised*) Did your father go with you?

KARANO:

Yes, he did. Said, he wanted to see what sort of man was this lawyer friend of mine—"the fellow who has so much influence on you, who is so close to you." This is how father put it to me.

RULLIARAM:

He was right. Did he, then, meet the lawyer? How did he fare? Old Gangu must have been a new experience for the learned, but matter-of-fact lawyer.

KARANO:

He liked father very much; to an extent I had not expected. Father also brought into play a side of his character, and personality I had never seen before. Not at all nervous, or uncertain, in regard to himself: simple, but deep and dignified; altogether a different man. Balwant treated him with a remarkable degree of reverance. Within five minutes, he was calling him Pitaji.

BIMLA:

This means your friend thinks very highly of you.

KARANO:

Yes, he has always been very kind to me, I hardly know why. After he had seen my father, I think he became even kinder. I feel I stand closer to him than ever before. What is still more surprising is that he appears to give a great deal of weight to my views on matters pertaining to the countryside.

RULLIARAM:

Did you have an opportunity to get his advice on our immediate problem?

KARANO:

A meeting was due to be held in his office, when we got there. It began within minutes. We attended the meeting, hoping I would get a chance for talking to him at the end. In this I was right. Balwant extricated himself from other things, and I had plenty of time for putting the case before him, in all its essential features. He said we must get this portion of the witness on the police file. But how, or at which stage, his mind was not quite clear. He wanted time to think, and I did not press him.

RULLIARAM:

There is another aspect of the problem. When it comes to be

known that Bimla had exposed the identity of one outlaw, her life would be in danger at the hands of friends of the outlaws involved in the raid, and the adherents of Jaswant in the village itself. Kartarpur would no longer be a safe place for her to live in.

BIMLA:

Yes. For the last few days, I have been more worried on this point than anything else—though I have said nothing to you.

KARANO:

This is the most serious part of the matter. The danger would remain an abiding factor, as long as we live. It will remain even after we leave this village, and go to live somewhere else.

RULLIARAM:

If that is the case, we must think twice, before we finally commit ourselves, since the consequences would be trailing after us, wherever we might go to live. In view of this danger, would it not be better for us to let sleeping dogs lie.

KARANO:

Yes, that question does arise, and we must be prepared to face it.

BIMLA:

Oh! How can you suggest that we should incur the guilt of hiding the truth, to save our skin?

(*Both search her face, and both get the impression that she is highly distressed in view of this peril. But her look remains firm and resolute. Both feel sure she will not take the line of cowardice, whatever else she might be prevailed upon to do*).

RULLIARAM:

My dear child, I am not suggesting anything of the kind. Nor does Karan Singh. But we do have to take everything into consideration.

KARANO :

Knowing your mind, your disposition, also mine own, as I do, I would never dare to suggest that you should hide the truth;

that you should withhold this part of your evidence. But I must not shrink back from telling you that most people, in your position, would never dream of telling the truth, at such grave personal risk to themselves. The peril would be so real, it would terrify even bold and fearless men, whereas you are only a young girl.

BIMLA:

I know that. But I don't think I can change my mind.

RULLIARAM:

Don't distress yourself on that score. We have no intention to advise that you start playing the coward, to save your own skin. That is not our intention at all. We are only trying to give due thought to all aspects of the matter, at all angles.

KARANO:

No, no, Bimla, please! Get this clear in your mind, once for all. In this affair, or in anything else, I would never suggest that you agree to do anything mean, or low, or cowardly. Heart and soul, I am with you and your father, in this thing. I am with you in everything that might befall us—now, or ever in future. As for the rest, let things sort themselves out as they might. Always, please, remember this.

RULLIARAM:

My dear Karno, we know we can always count on you. Bimla has more confidence in you than in anyone else; and she has faith in your judgement, more than she has in mine. We have no one else to rely upon.

BIMLA:

Yes, dear friend, we know we can always count on you. In my thoughts, I also never associate you with anything mean or cowardly. I know we can always depend on you.

(She looks at his face, and finds his eyes fixed on her, with an unfathomable devotion. Boldly she accepts this chance encounter of the eyes, with a response as sacred and full as the other's devotion. A dancing light leaps up in her eyes; it spreads all over her face, then converges on the lines of her lips, in a

sweet, spontaneous, innocent smile. Karan Singh rises, staggering on his legs, like a man dead drunk.

KARANO:

It is getting late. Maybe, it is past midnight. I must take leave, and let you have some sleep. When I get Balwant's opinion, I will come directly, to let you have the purport.

(He pushes his feet into his weather-beaten shoes, goes to the door of the workshop, opens it softly, and passes out into the street, noiseless like a shadow).

ACT FOUR SCENE ONE

Dining room at Lala Hikmatram's house. It is more expensively furnished than the dining room of Balwantraj, which we have seen. This means that Hikmatram has a heavier bank balance than Balwantraj; or he has more expensive tastes; or he better appreciates the value of impressive appearances in the eyes of the clientele. Coir matting on the floor, with a biggish carpet in the middle. The sideboard seems to be brand new, with plenty of polish, which makes it shine under the strong electric light. The crockery too has a more expensive look.

Lala Hikmatram and Balwantraj are having a leisurely cup of tea, with a bit of something. The talk between the two comprises a thorough discussion on implications of the views expressed at the meeting held to discuss the Tibetan rebellion.

HIKMATRAM:

The success of that meeing cannot be denied. It was astounding. Miraculous! Miracle number one, full attendance. You invited fifty. More than fortyfive turned up. This fullness of attendance means: (1) confidence in the genuineness of the man in whose name the invitations went out; (2) importance and urgency of the question proposed for exchange of views. The call went out from you. Evidently, therefore, you constitute the first and foremost solid factor, in a fluid, disintegrating situation—your personality, your reputation. People have shown they have faith in you. This is a big gain. In the present distressing phase of our social and political organisms, no one has faith in anyone.

BALWANT:

(*Cutting in rather sharply*) Look, why drag me in? Suppose you just leave me alone.

HIKMATRAM:

If you want me to leave you alone, why did you put up this show? Moreover, since the show has been so successful, why do you want to run away from the consequences of your own actions? I might very well say, your misdeeds. You called your friends. They came. You drew their attention to a very grave situation. They have agreed with you. You say something needs to be done. They say, OK; just tell us hat, and we shall do our best. At this stage you turn round on them, and say: "Please leave me alone." Does that make any sense?

BALWANT:

So you have been fired by an ambition to build me up as a political leader.

HIKMATRAM:

My dear fellow, there is no question of my wanting to build you up as a political leader. Attendance at the meeting has shown very clearly that you already stand built up, in the eyes of a section of the public plagued by a very critical mind—a section which normally believes in nothing except each in his own narrow and rigid field of self-interest. (*Balwant wants to say something, but the other gives him no chance*) Allow me to proceed. Do not interrupt me to say flimsy and silly things. The second solid factor, in the current situation, as revealed by the success of this meeting, is that in the Lower Middle Class there is a healthy core. A streak of this core, thin or thick, must be traceable in all the layers of our society. I hope you will not want to contradict me when I say that this honest and courageous core is our greatest national asset, for the simple reason it is intelligent, not so entirely selfish, as the professional political leaders, and their selfish followers. Do you, or do you not, agree with me here?

BALWANT:

Yes, I agree with you.

HIKMATRAM:

Do you rəalise that the moment you and I agree on the validity

of these simple conclusions, we dare not run away from the call of duty, as it has come to you on the basis of your own personal vision —to me in my contact with you.

BALWANT:

What do you mean?

HIKMATRAM:

Just what I say.

BALWANT:

Do you mind saying it again?

HIKMAT:

Not at all. Now listen: Premier Nehru has made a fatal blunder. He has visualised the greatness and glory of Bharatvarsh in hostility to our closest neighbours—Pakistan and China. U.S.A. will not always be here. Uncle Sam's log cabin lies deep in the dark woods he has snatched from the simple and poor, trustful Red Indians. The Asian climate, today or tomorrow, might drive him back to that cabin, nearly six thousand miles across the boiling oceans. But China and Pakistan will always be here. Why has Nehru found it necessary to turn these closest neighbours into enemies. This blunder has to be corrected—in the interest of world peace, and the freedom of Asia and Africa; in the interest of the coloured races; in the interest of humanity. Nehru is a great man. But in the way of most great men, he is childish—sometimes obstinate like a child. He, and the other responsible members of his outfit, will not deign to listen to you and me. But they would listen to us when they know we speak as representatives of the healthy core in the population of the country. In a manner of speaking, this healthy core does not seem to exist at the moment: it is neither organised, nor vocal. Many people would not imagine it existed, if you had not dragged it, for us, into the light of day. Having discovered it, you must give it a programme, then see it implemented.

BALWANT:

My dear friend, I wish you the best of luck. If you have come

to see things in that light, go ahead. You will find I am with you, to the hilt.

HIKMAT:

In this game I am nothing, not even a poor pawn. Since you have opened my eyes, *you* must lead. I will follow. Before you performed this silent miracle on me, before you quickened me with life, I had never bothered to give a thought to these things. My world, my only world, was my legal practice. Everything else was just irrelevant for me, foreign to my mind, to my nature. You know the rising legal luminaries. Their aim is money: their vision is money: and this was equally true in regard to me. But you have managed to trap me so nicely that you seem to have changed my nature. Had I remained true to the gods I had always worshipped, I should not have gone to that meeting. If I had only half imagined you would entangle me like this, I wouldn't have gone. But now I find there is no retreat—for you, or me.

BALWANT:

If you find a sense of duty, as a loyal citizen, has taken birth in you, why do you keep throwing the burden on me? Why do you keep blaming it on me?

HIKMAT:

Don't be an ass. I am not blaming anything on you. I am only trying to tell you that in you I have found a worthy leader. Put me down in your books as a faithful follower.

BALWANT:

Really?

HIKMAT:

Yes.

BALWANT:

Any reservations?

HIKMAT:

None.

BALWANT:

Can you suggest a name for the organisation?

HIKMAT:

Citizens' League?

BALWANT:

Good. You remain the Chairman, till a proper election of office bearers?

HIKMAT:

No, I don't. You will be the President.

BALWANT:

By Jove! I have a real good follower here. Disobedience, denial, defiance, at the very first step.

HIKMAT:

I beg your pardon. Yes, I remain the President, till the regular elections. You are the General Secretary, of course.

BALWANT:

OK. I don't mind, till you get the bally thing on proper wheels.

HIKMAT:

The next meeting?

BALWANT:

Say, the last Sunday of the month of March. A number of things shall have to be done before that meeting is held. Drafting of aims and objects, and the constitution.

HIKMAT:

Yes, oh yes.

BALWANT:

Then let us shake hands on it. (*They rise to their feet*) And so, for the present, I beg to take leave. (*He goes out.*)

ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

(The verandah in front of Balwant's office. Karan Singh in an easy chair, legs thrust forward, head thrown back, eyes closed. Tired and depressed. Balwant comes into the verandah from the inner portion of the house. For half a minute, he stands looking at his friend, before Karan Singh becomes aware of his presence).

BALWANT:

Hullo, Karan! Didn't know you were here. Sorry to have disturbed your nap.

KARAN:

I wasn't asleep.

BALWANT:

Worried?

KARAN:

Yes.

BALWANT:

What about?

KARAN:

That problem of Bimla's evidence.

BALWANT:

(*With a twinkle of mischief in his eyes*) Bimla? Bimla? What do you mean? Which Bimla?

KARAN:

Rulliaram's daughter.

BALWANT:

(*Taking a chair near him*) Yes, I remember now.

KARAN:

We have got to decide what we are going to do about that: is it really necessary that we get this part of her evidence on the police file of the investigation? Suppose we let sleeping dogs lie. Will that involve a moral weakness, a kind of cowardice, if we keep mum?

BALWANT:

To withhold a definite clue is certainly reprehensible in the eyes of law, if that is what you mean.

KARAN:

Yes, that is what I mean. I suppose I know the answer, too. Only I was wondering. Suppose we get her statement recorded by a magistrate, or the Superintendant of Police, we shall not be in a position to ensure there will be no leakage. The outlaws would be furious against her, if they come to know she had given the police a clue in regard to the identity of one of them, hence a clue against them all. For one member of the gang, under arrest, would have to name the others. So the entire gang would come to have a grudge against her, especially the adherents of Jaswant, in the village itself. The proposed course of action would, therefore, put her life in danger. She would have to leave the village, and go to live somewhere else. But where can she go?

BALWANT:

Yes, the danger would certainly be there; and it would be a real danger—not only imaginary. But it is up to her and her father to see, whether or not they would want to take this course, with the attendant risk. I would seek the advice of a magistrate I happen to know. I may also speak to the Superintendant of Police, with a genuine reputation for honesty. See me after two days. By that time I shall be clear in my mind as to what we would want to do, and how? I am just back from tea, at a friend's. You know him, don't you? Lala Hikmatram, the gentleman who presided over the meeting, where you and your father were present.

KARAN:

Yes, I remember him.

BALWANT:

During the tea, he was constantly hammering the idea into my mind that we should launch a political party, with aim to demand certain changes in our foreign policy, and to insist on some essential points for reform—for instance, corruption at home, and uplift of

the rural masses. You would recall that a large sector of these questions has often been thrashed out in the course of discussions between you and me.

KARAN:

Yes, I very well remember those discussions.

BALWANT:

Lala Hikmatram got me to commit myself to a political programme on these lines. May I hope that you will be with me, on these things?

KARAN:

Absolutely. May I take leave now? I desire to get back early today.

BALWANT:

OK. Good-bye, till we meet again after two days.

(They shake hands. Karan walks to the door, preoccupied, and passes out).

ACT FOUR SCENE THREE

(A great deal of water has flowed under the bridges, since Karan Singh said good-bye to Balwantraj, at the end of the last scene.

Bimla's evidence has been recorded by the Superintendent of Police, who promised to do his best against leakage. The danger to her life has been freely recognised by the Superintendent. The young girl has been provided with a Service revolver, with some ammunition. Karan Singh also has been similarly armed. Both have been advised to carry the weapons concealed on their person, and to get some target practised.

Rupchand, the Inspector of Police, appointed to investigate the raid on Rulliaram, goldsmith of Kartarpur, one morning, was found murdered in his bed, with a deep knife wound. On the night he was murdered, he slept in a bedroom of which one door opened directly into the street. A domestic servant stated his master used this room when he expected a visit from some friends who called at dead of night, much in the manner

of some mystery. The prevailing view is that these visitors were members of a gang, or gangs, of outlaws, with whom he was in league—protection, in exchange for cash, as a share in the loot. It has been taken that some of these outlaws fell out with him, over a division of the spoils, or some other treachery, and did him in. When the murder was discovered, the door opening into the street was fastened on the inside. So the murderer was someone who knew his way to the main door, and calmly went out through that exit.

This murder intensified appreciation of the risk being run by Bimla, his father, and Karan, as a close friend of the family.

Citizens' League has struck deep roots—Lala Hikmatram President, Balwantraj, General Secretary. Main points in the plank: re-adjustment of relations with Peking and Pakistan; elimination of corruption; aducation and discipline of public opinion. Once, twice, or even thrice a week, sometimes, it brings out a leaflet—Momentous Matters—for the good and loyal citizens, price one anna. It sells like hot cakes. Everybody knows, by this time, that the man at the back of the Citizens' League is Balwantraj, who is rising rapidly in public esteem.

The most remarkable thing in the affairs of the Citizens' League is that Lala Hikmatram shows no sign of beginning to be jealous of Balwant's popularity.

Almost in everything Balwantraj handles, his right hand man is Karan Singh. He is on the staff of the Citizens' League, installed by Balwant in an outhouse facing the verandah. His father is free to flit between the village and the new home, as persuaded by his whim of the moment.

For security reasons, Rulliaram and his daughter have come to live in the adjoining outhouse. It is not yet known in the village that they are living in town: they are believed to have gone on a pilgrimage to Bindraban. No one knows when they would be back. Balwant has provided them with a separate, inobtrusive entrance to their quarter. They do not have to come in, or go out of the main door, which opens into the big courtyard, between the office verandah and the outhouses. Karan Singh and his father use the main door.

The latest leaflet on Momentous Matters carries an announcement that the annual general meeting of the Citizens' League will be held on March 1, 2,

and 3. Preparations are going ahead at high speed. Rush on Membership forms is phenomenal. The binding qualification, to make a member eligible for election to the Working Committee, is a monthly donation of at least Rs. 100. *The condition is fully honoured by the standing members of the Working Committee in office. This seems to be an accurate measure for judging the growing strength of the League, both in membership and funds.*

In this general setting, the small, inconsequential world of old Gangu, his son Karan Singh, Rulliaram and his daughter, is suddenly thrown into a great agitation of the mind by a news item in the Papers that Thakur Jaswantrao, a headman of Kartarpur, has been arrested for complicity in an armed raid on the house of Rulliaram, goldsmith, resident of that village. Seated on charpais, Rulliaram, his daughter, and Karan Singh, are discussing the news in its direct bearing on their life. Old Gangu is not in).

KARAN SINGH:

The danger to your life now becomes real and pressing. Adherents of the man, in the village itself, and possibly outside, would be knowing their chief had been put into this position by Bimla's evidence.

BIMLA :

I know. But after the idea flashed in my mind that the masked outlaw, who molested me, closely resembled Jaswantrao, there was no other way for me. I felt I must make the information available for the police. I also had to further pinpoint the culprit by saying that in any case, if he is the man, his involvement in the raid could easily be proved, or disproved, by a healed bullet wound in the right shoulder. I could not bring myself to suppress a direct clue of this precision concerning the identity of one outlaw. If I had kept mum over it, I would have fallen very low in mine own esteem.

KARAN :

That is quite true. I am not trying to blame you. I only want to impress on you that you have to be very careful now. You should never be alone in the house.

RULLIARAM :

The police might get him to name the remaining culprits.

BIMLA :

That is quite possible. There is one strange thing come to my mind. Before he left after the raid, the Boss of the gang said he would soon pay us visit, as a friend. I wonder what he meant by that? It is possible he too may come to be arrested.

KARAN:

Yes, of course. Also other members of the gang—on the basis of the clues you gave to the police, in regard to the identity of one bandit. Thus, all these wild and desperate men have a grudge against you, which means so much more danger for you, personally. It is a good thing that you have come to know the feel of a gun in your hand. The steadiness you have shown at target practice should give you a measure of confidence, in case you have to face an attack. As for the Boss of the gang in the Kartarpur raid, Jaswant is already talking a great deal about him.

BIMLA :

What does he say ?

KARAN :

He says the man's name is Bhupindar ; one of his names, anyway, since it appears he has quite a number of them. He has turned armed robbery into a very fine art. He says there is a great deal of money in it, for those who dare; and he has a number of side lines—smuggling, narcotics, etc., on a stupendous scale. Maybe, these are his major interests: armed robbery only a side line. High-powered cars, when he travels on tarmac ; sturdy jeeps, where the going is heavy ; fleet-footed riding camels ; horses of the noblest breeds, notable for stamina and speed. He is the boss of a number of gangs, operating in separate territories. In each he is known by a different name. The police asked where was he to be found. He replied he did not know. He had never been to any of his hideouts. Didn't know where they were located. Unimaginable physical strength, if he fights with his hands. Like lightning on the draw. Whichever way you face him, you have no chance. And so on.

RULLIARAM :

If he does not know, or will not say, where one can find him, all this information is meaningless : it has no value.

KARAN :

Yes, that is true. It appears Jaswant enjoys tantalising the police, with statements of this kind.

BIMLA :

If he is really talking to the police like this, it means he is quite at home in police custody. Quite comfortable.

KARAN:

In the police lockup, as an accused ; or in prison as a convict, you can buy anything you need. Jaswant himself, or his friends, must be paying the price in cash. This goes without saying. Besides, he is being encouraged to talk—about himself ; about Bhupindar ; about their methods ; their favourite avocations, when free ; territories of the various gangs ; tensions and vendettas; romance and sex in the life of the desparadoes—all this constitutes good working material for police officers minded to earn their salaries. Jaswant also may be figuring to win favours and privileges by selling information about Bhupindar.

BIMLA :

What puzzles me is how a man like Jaswant came to be accepted by Bhupindar, even as a tentative member in one of his gangs. I feel sure Jaswant has a gang of his own. In this particular case, why didn't he work with is own men? Working with Bhupindar, he was only a minor, individual member, entitled only to a minor share in the loot. Further, if Bhupindar is really as big a guy as he is said to be, one wouldn't expect him personally to participate in all operations. The raid on us cannot have been a major operation, in their eyes, necessitating personal participation by the boss.

KARAN:

On some points, it appears, Jaswant has been persuaded to make a clean breast of it. His presence in Bhupindar's gang, on a temporary basis, is one of them. He says he is crazy about you.

Says he tried a number of times to get a few words with you, by hanging around in the village. But you never gave him a chance ; you never even looked at him—whenever he contrived to pass by your side, in the street. Then, by chance, he fell in with a man who turned out to be a bandit. He cultivated friendship with this bandit, and persuaded him to raid the house of the goldsmith in Kartarpur, of whose wealth Jaswant gave him exaggerated accounts. He also became a member of this gang, on probation, so to say. But the bandit with whom Jaswant chummed up was not head of this outfit, in his own name : he was only a lieutenant of Bhupindar. The presence of Bhupindar in the raid spoiled the game Jaswant had played, to get a chance for a talk with you, or to carry you off, to kidnap you, under cover of the raid. Jaswant says now he has only two aims in life : to get even with Bhupindar and to carry you off, to some place, where he can hold you as long as he likes.

BIMLA:

How do you happen to know so much of what Jaswant has been railing about?

KARAN:

From the SP, who is convinced I am on the right side of the law, in my own person ; also as one of your sincere friends. Jaswant had been nabbed about a week, when the news about his arrest came out in the Press; and he had been thoroughly interrogated by the SP himself. This officer is really a jewel of a man.

BIMLA:

Does Jaswant claim to know anything more about Bhupindar? Do you think he can lead the police to any of his lairs? How does it happen that Bhupindar has turned him loose, when he knows he will do his best to sting him?

KARAN:

Bhupindar must be feeling pretty sure Jaswant could do him no real harm. He must have made him innocuous, in some way, then kicked him out into the street.

BIMLA:

This Bhupindar must be a very extraordinary man.

KARAN:

Jaswant says he has never seen the man, without a mask. In height, build, general deportment, there is nothing special about him, to look at, anyway. But no one has any idea of the physical strength he possesses, except those who have come to know the feel of his knuckles, on the jaw, on the chin, or any other part of the body. As for his speed at the draw, no one has tested it, and lived. In organised crime, no one has any idea of the vastness of his territories, or variety of the business he handles. The most surprising thing is that he says no one can touch him. He breaks banks ; where he feels the need, he breaks up gangs, which try to cross his path ; he breaks international boundaries. Even if he should come to be nabbed by the police, he says the prison has not yet been built that could hold him, without his consent. Says he would come out just as soon as he might wish. He declares where a man masters the art of bribing people, that man can do anything he likes. No one can stand in his way.

BIMLA:

If Jaswant is talking like that, he has turned himself into a publicity agent for Bhupindar, the man whom he is planning to destroy. But that has nothing to do with us, has it?

KARAN:

No, it has nothing to do with us. Not directly. But these are matters of the greatest moment for the Citizens' League.

BIMLA:

What is that?

KARAN:

It is a new political party, organised by Balwant, and some of his friends, including myself. I will get you some reading material on it. I am sure you will find it very interesting. I will now pop out to the office for a while. Of course, you know that now you always have to be very wide-awake.

BIMLA:

I shall be looking forward to the reading material you say you would bring. Yes, I shall do my best to remain wide awake, as you put it. But I am beginning to feel rather sick of all this bother, about this and that. I don't seem to get if it has any sense of direction. I have no idea where we are going. Have you?

KARAN:

Yes, I know it has a sense of direction. I shall try to explain it to you, at the earliest opportunity. To the extent, anyway, that I have been able to see these things.

(Through a door which connects the courtyards of the two outhouses, he passes into his own part of the quarters, and thence to the office of Thakur Balwantraj, where, in one corner, for the present, he sits with the records of the Citizens' League. Bimla remains sitting where she was, following his receding figure, with a wistful look, eloquent with a meaning which might have intoxicated him to the point of madness, if he had seen it).

ACT FIVE SCENE ONE

(*Balwant's office, prepared for a meeting of the Working Committee of the Citizens' League, called to consider Resolutions on the agenda for submission at the plenary session. There are fifty chairs in the room, all occupied except two. These two members have intimated inability to attend owing to illness. This solid attendance is again a sign of the solid strength of the League. The Resolutions to be considered today by the Working Committee would determine whether the League would live, or prove to be a failure, in the heavy climate it has encountered since its inception. The President goes to occupy the chair, punctual to the minute, and calls upon the General Secretary to submit the Resolutions, on the agenda in his name*).

PRESIDENT:

Gentlemen, today's meeting is the most momentous, in the life of the League, so far. It will decide the destiny of the League, and the future of the country. I, therefore, hope and pray you will give it your full mind, and form your opinion on the Draft Resolutions strictly on merit, as given to you by your conscience, in all sincerity of purpose, without fear or favour. These Resolutions stand on the agenda in the name of Thakur Balwantraj, our General Secretary. Copies have been in the hands of members of the Working Committee for three days. So I venture to presume you have all marshalled your thoughts on the points involved. This should make the discussion here easy, speedy, and most fruitful. The Resolutions would be taken into consideration, clause by clause, and thrashed out to open conclusions, in favour of acceptance, or rejection, as the case may be. The nature and importance of these Resolutions demand unanimity in acceptance, or rejection. But that is entirely up to you. Now, Thakur Balwantraj, please proceed.

(*applause*).

BALWANT:

Gentlemen, usually it is permissible, even desirable, that the mover of a resolution should make a speech, to win support. But

these Resolutions do not need any canvassing. They will stand, or fall, on their own intrinsic strength, not on the mover's oratory. So I go straight to the point. Here is Draft Resolution, number one, clause by clause:

Whereas the future of a nation is largely determined by the friends and enemies it makes in the world around it;

(he pauses, and looks at the President).

PRESIDENT:

Do we agree on the substance of this clause?

SEVERAL VOICES:

Yes, we agree. We agree.

PRESIDENT:

If there is no difference of opinion on this basic principle, should we proceed with the next clause?

SEVERAL VOICES:

Please proceed. Go on, please.

BALWANT:

And whereas national policies should never, never be based on personal predilections, or thoughts of personal, or party gains;

SEVERAL VOICES:

Agreed....agreed.

PRESIDENT:

Any opposition?

VOICES:

No sir; none at all. Proceed, please.

BALWANT:

And whereas neither foreign relations, nor administrative measures at home, should be divorced from the principle of justice for all, without infringement of the basic and fundamental human rights;

VOICES:

Agreed, sir; there is full agreement.

(The President is carefully watching the mood of the house. He finds no trace of any opposition, and gives the Line Clear for taking up the next clause).

BALWANT:

And whereas expediency, shorn of the sense of moral principles, is a curse which falls on weak and selfish minds, to make them deviate from the path of justice, for small gains, at the cost of civilization, and human progress;

SEVERAL VOICES:

Excellent, excellent. Go ahead.

BALWANT:

And whereas our relations with China have rapidly slithered into a deepening crisis, with a military confrontation, across a tricky border;

VOICES:

That is quite true....That is quite true. No difference of opinion on the point. No difference at all. Go on, go on.

BALWANT:

And whereas, in this military confrontation we have accepted the task of the containment of China, as designed by American inordinate imperialism—we have accepted this task without reference to the basic question whether Peking has done us any harm;

VOICES:

These are patent facts. No one, with eyes, can dare to deny them. Go on, please.

BALWANT:

And whereas, to the best of our knowledge, Peking has never done any harm to USA; and whereas it is hardly in a position to inflict any injury on the United States of America, across the vast expanse of the Pacific;

VOICES:

Go on, please; go on. What you say is quite true. It is a most unfortunate situation for us. Continue, please.

BALWANT:

And whereas the Chinese people are perfectly within their rights when they reject one social, economic, and political system, and adopt another, which appeals to them, on the basis of its philosophy, and efficiency;

VOICES:

These clauses accurately reflect our feelings, our aspirations, and our fears. Please go ahead.

BALWANT:

And whereas, in the game being played by USA, we are blindly helping that country to create deep animosities between ourselves and Peking, which, before long, would demand the sacrifice of millions and millions of our boys, as cannon fodder, to save the more precious lives of American fighting men;

VOICES:

All this is quite true. Please go on.

BALWANT:

And whereas, in a policy inspired by USA, we are thoughtlessly betraying the cause of the freedom of Asia and Africa, by accepting a role as tools of American imperialism, turning India, and all its waters, into one vast base for America;

VOICES:

Good heavens! This is what we call a policy of non-alignment! Go on, please. Come to the real meat of this most damnable situation.

BALWANT:

So now, therefore, it is solemnly resolved that, without loss of time, we should carefully readjust our relations with Peking, to avert the peril of a war between ourselves and China, all to the advantage of Uncle Sam, coming out nearly 6,000 miles across the globe, to contain China, and still having the hardihood to claim, so loftily, and so piously, that he is devoted to peace. In the surcharged atmosphere, as it stands today, even an obscure overseer, while surveying the mountain border line, or an over-primed dashing young subaltern, can, overnight, fling us all into the icy waters of the RIVER OF NO RETURN, since clever Secret Service agents, of more than one foreign government, have useful contacts with our civil population, and our fighting forces, at all levels, to keep our mind fully conditioned.

Gentlemen, this brings me to the end of our Resolution Number One.

(*Deafening applause*).

PRESIDENT:

If there is any difference of opinion, I very earnestly invite it to express itself. These are not problems to be trifled with.

VOICES:

No dissenting voice.....no dissenting voice at all.

PRESIDENT:

Do I take it that the Working Committee unanimously recommends this Resolution for approval by the plenary session?

VOICES:

Yes, oh yes.

(*shouts of applause*).

PRESIDENT:

So now I have the honour to call upon Thakur Balwantraj, to submit the second Resolution, which stands on the agenda in his name.

BALWANT:

Whereas a dispassionate study of history forces us to the conclusion that the emergence of Pakistan is the result of a glaring lack of proper adjustment between the Hindus and the Muslims;

PRESIDENT:

Gentlemen, do we all agree on this starting point?

VOICES:

Yes, sir; we all agree.

PRESIDENT:

Go on, please.

BALWANT:

And whereas, without going into details, we must have the moral courage to admit that the roots of this maladjustment lie in a sense of economic insecurity, and social inferiority, understood to have been imposed on the Muslims, practically treated as Untouchables, even as late in the day as the nineteen-twenties;

And whereas this social norm of Hindu life inflicted a crippling economic injury upon the Muslims, and forced them to retaliate, around 1925, with a similar economic boycott of the Hindus.

PRESIDENT:

If there is any difference of opinion on the statement of facts in these clauses, I am prepared to let it be thrashed out fully at this stage. The facts at the back of this brief statement are of prime importance. They form a most unfortunate part of our history. We cannot deny them. If there is anyone among us who thinks differently, I beseech he should come forward, as a matter of our duty to the country, and correct our angle of approach.

VOICES:

Happily, sir, there is no difference as to the validity and truth of this analysis. Kindly ask Thakur Balwantraj to proceed.

PRESIDENT:

(*Looking at Balwant*) Please proceed.

BALWANT:

And whereas antipathies of the Hindu and Muslim minds have been shamelessly exploited by a number of uncharitable, rather sinister forces, for nearly two hundred years, the effect on the Hindu and Muslim mass mind has been disastrous;

PRESIDENT:

Gentlemen, please note that in this Resolution the Citizens' League is taking a course full of hazards, right and left. But there is not the least doubt in my mind that it is fully justified. However, if there is the least doubt or hesitation, in the mind of any member, I beg he should become vocal.

DETERMINED VOICE:

No, sir; oh no. Members of the Working Committee have come to this meeting after a deep study of the draft in their hands. Their mind is quite clear on the points involved; and they feel in duty-bound to take this stand, whatever the risk. We are in full agreement over the substance and purpose, and the language of these Resolutions, as they stand in the draft. Pray let Thakur Balwantraj proceed.

PRESIDENT:

(*Again looking at Balwant, with a peculiarly benign expression*) Proceed, please. The house is at your disposal.

BALWANT:

And whereas this sense of economic insecurity, and an implied social inferiority, drove the Muslims to demand partition of the country, as a last desperate resort;

VOICES:

Go on, please; go on.

BALWANT:

And whereas the genesis of the Kashmir question, as gleaned from the Radcliffe Award, and from subsequent events, and trends, lies in a deliberate British design to keep India and Pakistan perpetually divided, glaring at each other, over the border line, with arms supplied to both, that, at leisure, they should bleed each other to destruction and death;

And whereas Anglo-American diplomacy has been fooling both India and Pakistan, with a pretence that they were genuinely and honestly committed to get, in the UNO, a just decision on Kashmir;

And whereas this diplomacy also fooled Moscow into holding up progress by applying its veto, under an impression that by doing so it was defeating an important Anglo-American purpose, though, of course, that veto was nicely helping them to gain their end, namely, to keep the question hanging in the air, that both parties to the dispute should remain under their thumb;

And whereas there is no worthwhile future for India or Pakistan, except that they learn to live in amity and peace;

And whereas the Mahasabha, the Jan Sangh, and the RSSS vision and technique, for settling the basic Hindu-Muslim question, is shortsighted and suicidal, it being the height of injustice if we desire to punish the present-day Muslims for the faults of the Muslim rulers, in their time;

And whereas all minorities in the country—the depressed classes in the south, and Sikhs in the north—are gravely apprehensive in regard to their future;

And whereas all these are distressing symptoms of a deep-seated malady in the heart of the Hindu body politic;

So now, therefore, it is resolved that an altogether New Vision should be brought to bear upon all disputes with Pakistan. We should renounce lines of thought and action on which foreign 'friends' have set us; we should also renounce lines of thought and action recommended by narrow, fanatical, sectional organisations: we should go straight for a thorough readjustment of our relations with a people we can justly call our own kith and kin, to ensure peace and amity on a lasting basis. Pakistan seems to have been intended by nature as our first line of defence. If this country remains weak, our own first line of defence remains shaky. In fact the writing on the wall seems to mean that we should not, under foreign inspiration, begin to preen our feathers in the sunshine and warmth of our alliance with the treacherous and the deceptive West, planning to use us as cannon fodder, in wars fought to further their own ends. Under foreign inspiration, we should not lose our balance of mind, in a mood of self-glorification, and embark on the dangerous path of widening our sphere of influence, as the 'leader' of South East Asia. Talk of LEADERSHIP here, at this juncture, is folly. At this stage of our development we must discipline ourselves to work in a team of equals. Instead of raising animosities right and left, we should, rather, begin to work out plans on the basis of a feasibility of independent Pakistan, India, Indonesia, China, and Japan, well knit together in some grand design, with places of honour in it for the smaller countries of South East Asia, and for the USSR, if willing to pull their weight with us, without reservations. This Grand Design should work hand in hand with the solid Muslim Bloc, to save the Africans from being liquidated, or turned into mere beasts of burden, as in South Africa and Rhodesia, with American and British connivance, even open, unashamed, encouragement. If we do not heed this awful writing on the wall *now*, our own turn will come, to be similarly liquidated, or ground down into the dust, to make the globe safe for the Whiteman....and.... and for the Jews.

VOICES:

(*Horrified beyond measure*) Oh God !

Good Lord ! How fiendish !

How unimaginably diabolical !

And mark how glibly they talk of peace !

BALWANT:

Gentlemen, this brings me to the end of the second Resolution.

(*He bows to the house, and goes back to resume his seat*).

PRESIDENT:

The third Resolution stands in the name of Mr. Daulatram. I, therefore, have the honour to invite him to put it before the house.

DAULATRAM:

Gentlemen, my mind is in great distress over the bitter truth of the two Resolutions we have passed; and this bitterness is even more acute over the Resolution I desire to put before you, to the following effect:

Whereas the incidence of corruption in our country has reached an unprecedented height;

And whereas corruption on such a vast scale, in every walk of life, signifies that the moral fibre of the nation is rotten to the core, with everything, and everybody for sale, provided the bid is high enough;

And whereas highly placed people, who would be shocked if you tried to bribe them with hard cash, easily fall for it, when the bribe comes to them in some intangible, refined form—for instance, promises to gratify carefully planted and assiduously nurtured aspirations and ambitions; the company of glamour girls ; opportunities for the worship of glamour goddesses in beautiful surroundings, and so on;

And whereas the disease can be stamped out, or, to begin with, reduced by half within six months;

And whereas corruption on such a vast scale is a sign of stark inefficiency, fatal for national strength;

And whereas the responsibility to stop the rot lies on the Prime Minister, and the Provincial Chief Ministers—who continue to fail in this vital task;

So now, therefore, it is resolved that those who run the country, should take the trouble to eliminate the fell disease from the system, or vacate the seats of authority, for those who can. It is an unnerving mystery how administrative heads of national institutions tolerate corruption thriving around them, even though, let us concede, they are not corrupt themselves. To check corruption is very easy, if the man in the chair is not corrupt himself. Only knaves claim that corruption cannot be eliminated: that we have got to live with it. All this talk is silly. If those responsible for checking corruption do not know how to do it, let them go to those who can, and learn it.

(*Applause*).

PRESIDENT:

No opposition?

VOICES:

No, sir.

None at all.

Passed by a unanimous vote.

PRESIDENT:

Gentlemen, at this stage of the proceedings, I feel it is my duty to sound a note of warning. A really extraordinary degree of moral courage is needed, if we desire to stand by these three Resolutions. As your President, I have been closely watching the temper and mood of the house, on the substance and purpose of these recommendations. I am happy to say that I have not seen any sign of weakness, or hesitation, on your part, on any of the points involved. Still I must warn you that you should think twice, before you finally decide to recommend these Resolutions to be passed by the plenary session, as they stand. Instead of riding on the current, you desire to pull the boat up-stream. That is never an easy task. In this case, it is doublly difficult. The Government, the party in power, and the mood of the masses, have come to be set in a mould you will not find easy to recast. However, it is all entirely up to you. I would now be glad to take down the names of members who desire to address the house, before the debate on these Resolutions

is finally closed. Now let me see—yes, Mr. Kashiram, Mr. Surjanmal, Mr. Devraj.

A VOICE:

Sir, may I suggest that, for the present, we listen to these speakers. At the end, more can be invited, if it is felt that more time should be given to the debate. On the other hand, if the mind of the house is firmly made up, there would be no point in prolonging the discussion.

PRESIDENT:

(*After a pause*) Since there seems to be no opposition, no disagreement, I proceed as suggested. I have the honour to call upon Mr. Kashiram to let the house have the benefit of his views.

KASHIRAM:

(*Short stature, middle-aged, prosperous, clear-eyed, with a straight look*; *beginning to accumulate a little fat*). Mr. President, and my dear friends, I presume I am well aware of the deep import of these Resolutions. First I will speak on mine own personal behalf; then I would venture to say a few words in regard to the reaction of the house concerning the substance and purpose of the three Resolutions, as it has grown on me, while I sat listening. I am happy to say there is no confusion, or doubt, in my mind, in regard to anything said in these Resolutions. I also realise the course we desire to take is beset with difficulties and dangers of many kinds. The mass mind in our country is swayed by charlatans, in the first place; in the second place, by fanatics; in the third place, by fools, or knaves. Wise counsel can prevail here only if, and to the extent, it is prepared to placate and feed the categories I have named. The result is that the mass mind here is neither educated, nor disciplined. I agree with the President that the course we are taking has many hazards. But there is no weakness in our mind in regard to the validity of the facts, or the line of argument we are taking. The things we have said in these Resolutions, are things which need to be said. It is a duty we owe to our own sense of self-respect, and to our country. If we fail to say them, openly, clearly, in public, we shall be failing in our duty.

(*Applause*).

PRESIDENT:

Now I have the honour to call upon Mr. Surjanmal.

SURJANMAL:

(*Tall and fat; moves pondrously; speaks sowly, but impressively*) I only wish to register my feeling that the course we are taking is full of many perils. If we had not come forward to bring the Citizens' League into being, we could have maintained a silence over all these things. But now that we have come into politics, we can no longer afford to remain silent, and yet maintain our sense of self-respect. Now we owe a duty to ourselves, and a duty to our country, to our own people floundering in heavy seas. I submit, Sir, that we must not fail to take this stand, whatever the risk.

(*Applause*)

PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Sir; thank you very much, for being so clear, so firm, and so brief. Now I have the honour to call upon Mr. Devraj.

DEVRAJ:

(*Young, and full of fire; sharp, piercineg eyes*) I agree fully with the substance and the purpose of the Resolutions, and I am sure there is no dissenting voice among us. The point to which I desire to draw the mind of the house is the need for making security arrangements for the plenary session, where these Resolutions are to be debated and finally passed. I do not have the slightest doubt they will be passed with an overwhelming majority, if not altogether unanimously. But I feel it in my bones that persistent attempts will be made by elements outside the League, to disrupt the proceedings. On the success of the security arrangements we make now depends the success of our vision. The forces against us have the administrative machinery to help them, secretly, anyway, if not quite openly. The Hindu Mahasabha, the Jan Sangh, the RSSS, and the popular prevailing prejudices, will work against us. The RSSS has been allowed to be openly revived, without any change of heart, which means its hands are dyed red with the blood of Mahatma Gandhi. Its hero is Godse, who had the heart to pour burning lead into the unresisting body of the greatest, and the most saintly

freedom fighter in the history of India. In the situation as it stands, the general attitude of the police would be to leave the disrupting elements unhindered in their endeavour to disturb and disperse the audience. As I look at the matter, after the Working Committee has approved the draft of these Resolutions, the most important and urgent work is to devise means for safeguarding the order and tranquillity of the plenary session. May I suggest that a sub-committee should be set up to study this problem, and submit a report, say, within a week, from today.

PRESIDENT:

This is a capital idea, I think. Any more suggestions?

VOICES:

The suggestion is very sound.
Can't think of anything better.
Let's have a sub-committee.
It should be a small and compact body.
A sub-committee of five, shall we say?
Let the President nominate the members of this committee.

PRESIDENT:

Does the house agree that I should nominate members of this sub-committee?

VOICES:

Yes, Sir; oh yes.
Certainly.
Yes, Sir: you enjoy the fullest confidence of the Working Committee.

PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Then let us have Thakur Balwantraj as Chairman; Mr. Daulatram as Secretary; members: Mr. Bishandas, Mr. Nandlal, and Mr. Devraj. Would this do?

VOICES:

Yes, Sir.
Oh yes. That's fine.

PRESIDENT:

OK. It is now my privilege to wind up the proceedings, with just one or two remarks.

It is my impression that Thakur Balwantraj drafted the concluding clause of the second Resolution in a sublime moment of great inspiration. It is very startling; full of life; full of fire; full of righteous wrath. The substance of the clause is bare truth—no colouring; no false accentuation. But in the eyes of a man whose mind has not retained a long chain of events, in various places, far removed from each other, and diversely conditioned, it might tend to appear as greatly exaggerated. I, therefore, think it my duty to make a brief reference to events which form the background of the political awakening in which the substance of this clause has its roots.

A VOICE:

Just half a second, Sir. For clinching the argument, a thorough grasp of the background of certain events is most essential. Please do bring it into a proper focus.

CHAIRMAN:

Thank you; thank you very much for the kind support you have given to my idea. Here is my picture of the background. During the first World War, Col. Lawrence persuaded the Arabs to rise in revolt against the Turks, with solemn promises that the House of Sharif Husain, Viceroy at Mecca, under the Turks, would be raised to the highest eminence in Arabia—in fact a promise that it would be made ruler of the entire Arabian peninsula; Syria and Palestine included. This was the cunning bate with which Sharif Husain was hooked. At the end of the war, however, Palestine was grabbed by Britain, and Syria was handed over to the French. Promises given to Sharif Husain were thrown to the winds. Ashamed and mortified, Col. Lawrence, in sheer disgust, returned the decorations showered upon him, for his signal success in Secret Service assignments. While Sharif Husain was pressing his claim, he was attacked by Ibn Saud, and driven out of Arabia.

A VOICE:

Yes, Sir: please forgive me for this interruption. I remember, in knowledgeable circles, in many places, there was a strong suspicion that the attack on Sharif Husain was prompted, directly or indirectly, by Britain, to liquidate a troublesome and awkward partner.

CHAIRMAN:

Dear friends, I myself clearly remember these things. For the service the Arabs rendered to the Allies, in the first World War, they were rewarded with a National Home for the Jews in Palestine—without prejudice, it was said, to Arab rights. Please mark the shameful hypocricy of this language. They proceeded to cut off the richer portion of the country, and hand it over to a militant Zionism, but pretend they have not done any harm to legitimate Arab interests. The Arabs struggled against this perfidious injustice; but, unashamed, London and Washington proceeded to make the Jewish National Home in Palestine impregnable.

VOICES:

Shame, oh shame ! How shameful ! How dastardly !

CHAIRMAN:

Gentlemen, at a crucial stage, in the Arab struggle, a noble gentleman came to be entrusted, by the UNO, with a mission to study the problem of Palestine, and put up recommendations. His name was Count Bernadotte (I am not sure of the spelling). He got to the bottom of the problem. However, before he had settled down to write out his report, there was a leakage, in some mysterious manner, that some of his views were inclined to do some justice to Arab rights, supposed to be protected by a basic clause in the infamous Balfour Declaration. He was shot dead, and the assassin got away with it. The noble Count's second in command was an American, Ralph Bunche. He was immediately whisked away somewhere, by USA, and was never heard of for a number of years. He was an American, a man of great intelligence and integrity. Had he been left on the job, he might have endeavoured to do somej ustice to basic Arab rights, following in the footsteps of his chief.

VOICES:

Shame ! Shame for USA and UK !

Still they have the hardihood to claim they stand for peace, and international justice !

In the context of modern events and trends, they are outstanding villains of the piece !

CHAIRMAN:

They are; they are: no doubt about it. But listen, please. There is a great deal to be said on this point. For instance, then came Israel, a State born in sin, an offspring of American intrigue, parentage established by Washington itself, since the new State was given recognition before it was born.

VOICES:

Who was the father of this brat, born out of wedlock, shall we say?

Let's have the name of the father!

Name of the father, please !

CHAIRMAN:

Two fathers—not one: London and Washington. I think Truman was the President of USA. I do not remember who was the tenant at 10 Downing Street. But there is very little in names; it is the reality at the back which counts. Anyway, through the years since its birth, Israel has been helped with arms and money, to such an extent that a special correspondent of the Daily Mail solemnly reported, many years ago, that the Jews could stage a successful, and simultaneous, march to Cairo and Damascus.

VOICES:

How nice for the Arabs !

How beneficial !

How wonderful !

And all this has been done without prejudice to legitimate Arab rights !

Wonderful ! Wonderful !

CHAIRMAN:

Now recall to mind how UK and France collaborated to sell

Abyssinia to Italy, while outwardly London and Paris continued to talk loudly about sanctions against Rome.

VOICES:

We remember ! We remember !
The Hoare-Laval Pact !
Neat and clean !

CHAIRMAN:

Then France committed a neat and clean act of sheer piracy in the air. Topnotch Algerian leaders were travelling on an international airway. French fighter planes surrounded this civilian aircraft, forced it to land, and took the Algerian leaders prisoner, then buzzed off to Paris. World opinion was struck aghast, and roared with wrath. But who cares for world opinion, when profitable business has to be transacted. Paris and London went better: in collaboration with Israel, they attacked Egypt. Outwardly, USA sat on the fence, but the inside story is that combat ready troops, on American warships cruising in the Mediteranean, were waiting for orders to march straight to Cairo, *if American lives were in danger !*

VOICES:

Brutus is an honourable man, isn't he?
Double-talkers !
Double-crossers !
Double-crossed the Arabs over Palestine.
Tried to double-cross Egypt !
What a nice and highminded people !
So devoted to the pursuit of world peace !

CHAIRMAN:

Fortunately for Egypt, however, Nassir had so disciplined his people, that, out of nearly 20,000 Westerners on Egyptian soil, at the time, not one was hurt. So the pretext never materialised. Then, under some plain-speaking from Moscow, USA thought better of it, and refrained from joining the British and the French brigands.

VOICES:

How nice, how honest !
How devoted to peace !
These Yankees !

CHAIRMAN:

Let me give you another instance of their double-dealing. Ever since South Africa began to enforce apartheid, they have been zealously talking of sanctions. But, on the inside, the American dollar has been helping South Africa to keep its head out of the water. How could the Yankees blame South Africa for liquidating the Blacks, after the inspiring example they set for the Whites, everywhere, by neatly liquidating the Red Indians. Essentially the aim, and the methods are the same. If South Africa can make a success of apartheid, the aim and method could, in fact, *would* be tried by the Whites, against the Coloured people, all over the earth.

VOICES:

Yes, Sir; for us the writing on the wall is quite clear.

Only we lack the vision to see it.

We shall continue to lack this vision just as long as we sell ourselves for the dope they call AID WITHOUT STRINGS.

MORE VOICES:

The Americans are very noble people.

You see how they are selflessly doing their best to run the world as if their resources were a Trust for charitable purposes !

The Yankees are very good people; they do not want anything for themselves.

All their endeavour is directed towards development of backward countries !

ANOTHER VOICE:

You see, their sole aim is to make the world safe against Communism. That is why they are trying so hard to destroy the People's Republic of China. But, then, why are they so obviously making friends with the USSR? With the Father of Communism? And

really, gentlemen,t he Americans must be several kinds of fools, rolled into one colossal folly, if they honestly think Communism can be crushed by a military defeat. To destroy Communism, it must, first, be defeated on the intellectual level. On the practical, administrative level, it can be crushed, if, in the countries they are trying to save, they can manage to bring into being regimes purged clean of corruption. Otherwise all their fire power is just futile. Chiang Kaishek lost because the regime, of which he was the unfortunate head, was rotten to the core.

MORE VOICES:

Yes, Sir, that is true.

The hydrogen bomb is not the weapon, if the aim is to destroy Communism.

CHAIRMAN:

Gentlemen, let me remind you of what is happening in what was called Belgian Congo. Lumumba was killed because he had grown insolent in his demands on behalf of the Blacks of Congo. He had to be shot. Gizenja was the second champion of the Blacks in Congo. He too was pumped full of lead. But Tshombe, the hateful traitor, has been thriving, as if he were the especial darling of heaven. Hammerskjoeld also became somewhat of a suspect, in the eyes of the powers that be. We all know he died in an aircrash, in mysterious circumstances, to say the least. All these are extremely painful events. It is not pleasant to dwell on them. But I had to make a brief reference to them because, someone, otherwise, might have thought that the concluding part of the first Resolution had gone too far.

VOICES:

No, Sir, not at all.

These events are like poisonous thorns sticking in the mind and memory.

We have no desire to forget them.

We cannot forget them.

How can we?

In fact the memory of many other things comes crowding upon the mind.

It is not easy to remember these things, without wanting to do something rash.

CHAIRMAN:

Gentlemen, I beg leave to remind you, once more, we cannot afford to forget that the moment we begin to talk of a readjustment of our relations with Peking and Pakistan, we shall have to deal with all these diabolical forces of iniquity. But it would be cowardice of the most despicable variety, like rats, if we scurry back into our holes in the ground, and let the future of the human race go dark, by default on our part. So let these fiends, these demons, these monsters, rave and kill as they like—openly, or secretly, we shall fight with the greatest resolve, to justify our conscience, and our existence, in a world where human beings are so scarce. To quote a verse from the great Rumi:

Kaz Devo dad Malulama
Insanam Arzust.
I am in great distress,
And despair, over these fiends,
These demons, these monsters,
Encountered everywhere. My dear
Friends, the deepest longing
Of my soul is for the company
Of real and genuine
Human Beings!

(After he has finished, the Chairman stands silent, and motionless, for some seconds. The audience remains spellbound, struck dumb, and stunned, by the enormity of the purpose to which the Citizens' League had set its hand. Then the members rise solemnly to their feet, and crowd round the Chairman, seeking to press his hand, in a mute gesture of devotion, to reassure him they would stand by his side, through thick and thin, even unto death. Then they file out of the room, singly, or in small groups of varying size. After Balwant has said goodnight to the last man, he closes the door, puts the chain on, then walks back into the room. He looks

tired, and thoughtful. Sinking into a chair facing the inner wall of the verandah, he stretches out his legs, throws himself back in the chair, and closes his eyes, remaining in that position for ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, as if he had fallen asleep. Then he springs up, to sit bolt-upright, as if he had been startled and shaken by an electric shock).

(He is staring in front, framed in the doorway, where he perceives a commanding Presence—the tall and sparing figure of a Sanyasi, *in a long saffron robe, down to his ankles; a long, white beard; long, matted hair, hanging down on his shoulders in thick ropes, thrown back from a white and shining forehead; the coils of a black cobra constantly moving, silently, in and out of the ropes of hair, hood raised and spread out at the back of the impressive head of the venerable ascetic. Balwant is bewildered, and looks at the* Sanyasi *as if hypnotised. He wonders whether he is awake, or asleep, and dreaming. The ascetic addresses him in a voice full of a deep sympathy).*

THE PRESENCE:

Do you know, young man, that the road you have selected is a hard, mountainous road?

BALWANT:

Yes, Sir, I know that very well. On that point I have no illusions. My difficulty is the weakness, and shortness, of my vision. In the upper reaches, the slopes and the hilltops are wrapped in clouds. There would be forks in the path, where a mistake would put me astray, or hurl me down to death, thousands of feet below. Would it be safe for me, there, to trust to my instinct? Or, would you, in your vast vision, and wisdom, provide me with a little light?

THE PRESENCE:

Listen carefully: your NEFA border will show sparks in the very near future. But that would be, more or less, a stage-managed show, on the part of New Delhi, designed to make Uncle Sam loosen the purse strings, in money and war material, more and more. The real danger will come elsewhere: it will expose the fell designs of the Whiteman against the Blacks of Africa, and the Coloured people of Asia. Look at the wall in front of you. Read what you find there, written in red letters, burning like flames.

(*On the wall Balwant finds a newspaper page, flashed as though on a cinema screen. He reads aloud slowly, with extreme care, as if trying to store up the words in his memory*: "*New York, October* 4: *The former American President, General Dwight Eisenhower, has repeated his implied advocacy of the use of nuclear weapons in North Viet Nam.*

"*At a Washington press conference yesterday, he said that he would not preclude the use of atomic weapons, and went on to add: 'When you appeal to force, to carry out the policies of America abroad, there is no court over you.*"

"*Last month, General Eisenhower, in an educational programme, had stated that in those parts of the world where people did not place much value on human life, tactical nuclear weapons could be used.*

"*The implication of this philosophy was quite clear—life in Viet Nam, and Asia, was quite cheap, and so the United States should not hesitate winning the war there with the use of nuclear weapons, even if millions of 'natives' died.*

"*General Eisenhower's remarks have not received much publicity in this country, and in private, American officials had dismissed him as 'senile'.*

"*But there are generals in the Pentagon, and influential politicians in Washington, who would like to do exactly what General Eisenhower has been thinking aloud.*"

(*As Balwant finishes reading this item, the Presence continues:*)

You see here, my son, that the old General has let the cat altogether out of the bag. Mark the innocence with which he has revealed the innermost secret of the Whiteman's mind, which he has been guarding with such deceitful cunning. Place it side by side with the moral philosophies they talk so much about. If the Africans and Asians, even now, refuse to note the awful writing on the wall, it would entirely be their own fault. This is a peep into the future I have given you. Was this the kind of light you said you needed very badly?

(*Balwant has been struck aghast by what he has read, and he appears quite overcome. He replies, lowly, as though in a dream*).

BALWANT:

Yes, venerable father, that is what I meant.

THE PRESENCE:

There will come a time when the American President will begin to talk sentimental, treakly stuff in regard to the Russians. He might begin to say, for instance, that the Americans and the Russians were 'natural friends'. When this comes about, it should not be dismissed as sentimental dribble. There would be a deeper meaning in it—that over the Colour question, or something else equally wicked USA had taken Moscow in tow.

BALWANT:

(*Horrified beyond measure*). Reverent father, is it going to be as bad, as unprincipled, as all that?

THE PRESENCE:

There you talk like a doped and duped, innocent, child. The Whiteman has no principles, apart from the pernicious principle of his own superiority. Of course, there has been a period of human history when he deceived large portions of gullible human beings that he had moral and ethical standards. But that illusion has gone to pieces, and he cannot build it up again. Now, as the days go by, he would only be laying bare the perfiddy in his mind, more and more, until he comes out before us in his true light—a shapeless monster, with which the Coloured people shall have to come to grips, if they are to survive. For this killer, no holds are barred; and he loves to strangle his victims in a sudden fatal grip, and no nonsense, as he would emphatically put it.

BALWANT:

You are right, reverent, father; I recall having read, lately, items in the press which denote that their old talk about the Yellow Peril is being revived, and intensified, behind the scenes, in preparation for the final show-down, where the danger is that Russia would let the Coloured people down, throwing the entire burden on China.

THE PRESENCE:

Yes. And beware of the time when the American President

comes to what he would call the 'Manila conference', to consult his Asian odd-job-men, doped with the impressive title of 'allies'.

BALWANT:

Yes, reverent father! *(Horrified beyond measure, by the fiendish vistas rolled out before his eyes by the Presence, he is now asking questions like a man hypnotised)* What would be the inner purpose of the consultation?

THE PRESENCE:

Without putting, necessarily, putting it in words, to sound them on the use of 'tactical nuclear weapons', as old Ike put it.

BALWANT:

Reverent father, what answer would the Asiatic allies of the USA give—to the august President condescendingly sitting in their midst, as if they were really his equals in dignity and rights....even more condescendingly than Vice-President Johnson sat and talked to Bashir, the cameleer in Karachi.

THE PRESENCE:

They would mildly urge him to be careful. But the President would come to Manila, his mind made up.

BALWANT:

Made up in regard to....what?

THE PRESENCE:

The drain of the Veit Nam war, and the injury to American prestige, would have become unbearable. He would want to finish up in one stroke—a simultaneous drop of the hydrogen bomb, at a number of selected points, to throw North Veit Nam back into the 'Stone Age', as leading lights of the United States Air Force would very ably be putting it.

BALWANT:

Reverent father, what next?

THE PRESENCE:

With the world recovering slowly from the shock the voice of the

American President would be booming out all over the world: "As President of the United States of America, when I find myself constrained to use force, there is no court over us. If you agree with me OK; but if you don't, you have got to lump it. Anyway, what's done, is done. It cannot be undone. Let all beware who might be planning to injure American interests, or to oppose American basic policies!" or words to that effect.

BALWANT:

Anything more, reverent father?

THE PRESENCE:

No, my poor boy! What need is there for anything more to be said? I have spoken to you as an oracle, from my urgent and imperious sense of a dire human need. My appearance before you is a tribute to your sincerity. It is now for mankind, for humanity, for the god-in-man, to see what should be done.

BALWANT:

How much time would you give, after the Manila Conference?

THE PRESENCE:

About six months. Not very much more than that. Say, till the pending elections in USA have been held, and they are found to lend tacit support to the hidden decision in the mind of the President. Meanwhile, the Washington peace campaign will be kept fooling everybody, to make it appear that North Veit Nam, itself, had asked for what had at last to be administered to it.

[*Balwant now sits stupefied, hardly able to utter a word. The Presence remains silent for a few moments, then adds*]:

THE PRESENCE:

There is yet another sign, by which you may know the time. The President would say he would use American power 'with restraint'. At the moment there would be as many as nearly two hundred air strikes in a day: the restraint, evidently, would not refer to the conventional fire power of the American bomber. The promise seems to refer to the use of the atomic bomb, to the 'tactical

nuclear weapons'. So, my son, live and learn; and decide to do your duty, without fear, or hope of favour. Farewell!

(He fades out of sight. Balwant is left staring blankly at the vacant doorway, his mind weighed down by the prophetic pronouncements of the unexpected Presence. If USA knocks North Viet Nam back into the Stone Age, with hydrogen bombs, where would the devastation end? Would the human being in the Whiteman survive these searing events? Or would he be turned into some terribly evil and vicious monster, whose destruction Nature shall have to take into its own unerring hands? Whichever way events worked themselves out, Balwant felt sure that by opting for a total negation of all moral and ethical values involved, the Whiteman would set the seal on his own doom).

EPILOGUE

APA has something very special to say, dateline London, October 17, 1967......Let us listen :

"Leaders of Britain's Labour Government were reported split today over a South African request for modification in a two year old ban on the sale of arms.

"Qualified sources said that the South Africans had lately been displaying an active interest in the possible purchase of British warships, submarines, and naval aircraft.

"On the face of it, these are weapons which could not be used against the non-white, voteless majority in the apartheid (segregationist) republic.

"The issue of modifying the British arms embargo was said to have been discussed here last week when South African Foreign Minister Hilgard Mueller conferred with Mr. Wilson and Foreign Secretary George Brown. Their talks also ranged over the constitutional crisis in Rhodesia, where South African units are campaigning, despite British protests, to crush an African guerilla movement.

POSITIVE RESPONSE

"The informants said that some members of the Wilson Government favoured responding positively to the South African request, on economic and political grounds.

"They argue that multi million pounds orders would strengthen Britain's wobbly finances ; and they calculate such a deal would help ensure South African co-operation in the quest for a negotiated settlement of the Rhodesian constitutional crisis. Among Ministers identified by informants with these views were Foreign Secretary George Brown and Chanceller of the Exchequer James Callaghan.

"Other British Ministers were said to be resisting the projected deal. They feel that it would conflict with past Labour Party pledges to oppose apartheid.

"These Ministers, informants said, take the view that any economic gains Britain might derive would be more than offset by the loss of African and Asian trade and goodwill.

"No decision has yet been reached by the Cabinet as a whole, informants said."

The question here would rise in the mind of all intelligent observers : What is South Africa's need for an operational navy ? There is no worthwhile Naval Power hostile to it. Many close observers of international trends feel Russia has done nothing, really, to help the African Blacks in their struggle against the cruelty of a resurgent predominance of the Whiteman, beyond the fiascoes and stalemates created in the Congo and Nigeria, for instance.

Another important aspect of the proposed deal is an inobtrusive speed with which South Africa would be provided with a navy, immediately operative. New

construction would take from fifteen to twenty years, depending on the size and strength aimed at. Since an attempt is to be made to eliminate the inconvenient time factor, by providing a ready made navy, with a trained complement, it means South Africa's need for a navy is immediate and urgent—in other words, rooted in the current international crisis, especially over the present and future prospects for the poor African Blacks, so eagerly beginning to feel their wings. In other words, South Africa is to be immediately furnished with a navy to eliminate the possibility of Chinese hardware reaching the African Blacks in any appreciable measure.

This is weigty evidence that South Africa and Rhodesia are being strengthened as a relentless spearhead in Africa of a resurgent and heartless White Supremacy.

A South African navy in the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean, backed by a Russian presence based on the Persian Gulf, should be able to cope with possible intrusions by the Peoples' Republic of China. This dirty work of the Anglo-American-Russian Combine would be done by South Africa and Rhodesia, under the shielding shadow of the Russian naval, land, and air forces, based on the Persian Gulf.

In this eventuality Pakistan would be the only possible friend for China, in this part of the world. Pressures on Pindi would be enormous. But if we show any weakness here, or even indecision, it might well be fatal for us. The White-man has shown he is no friend of the Arab, or the African Natives. The real favourites, of all possible combinations of the White races,

are South Africa, Rhodesia, Israel, and India—just the countries which consistantly have been flouting the Atlantic Charter, and the UNO.

When Israel attacked the Arabs last year, Russia, immediately, and frantically, rushed to the General Assembly of the UNO ; then it ran to the Security Council. President Podgorny paid a condescending visit to Cairo, then to Damascus. In these quick moves, and promises of help, there was a great deal of theatricality, but little substance.

By giving them arms aid Russia has been trying to hide from the Arabs the stark reality that Moscow has sold the pass to the Anglo-Americans, with a nice and juicy slice carefully reserved for itself. It seems undeniable that Russian diplomacy in the Arab-Israel crisis is serving the ends of Washington and London, by advising the Arabs to extend recognition to Israel, or stew freely in their own juice. The semblance of arms aid, however heavy, is hardly anything more than a face a saving device, since it takes care to leave the edge on the side of Israel. Those gifted with vision in Africa and Asia, have seen through these moves.

It appears that the Arab and Black population of Africa is to be gradually depleted by various means, discovered and tested in various places, in time to repopulate the continent with the Whites.

President Johnson's naivety of approach is sometimes extremely funny. Giving his reaction to the demonstration at the doorsteps of the Pentagon, AFP credited him with saying a wonderful thing. "Peace and stability will come to Asia only when the aggress-

ors know that they cannot take another peoples' land by force." This is fine. However, if he is really honest in this, why doesnt he say the same thing to Israel ?

Anyhow, the writing on the wall for the people of Asia and Africa is quite clear. Israel will not relinquish the territory it has grabbed in successive swoops. The Jews have been equipped by London and Washington to deal with the Arabs in Nortn Africa. South Africa and Rhodesia will do the dirty work in the south by eliminating the Blacks. The language evolved for speaking about killing the Blacks exposes the evil intentions at the back. Rhodesia's open defiance and rebellion is now given a very dignified word It is now called a 'constitutional crisis'.

These are the results of a *pragmatic* view of life— of the current world situation, as seen by level-headed, practical, political leaders among the Whites. They have to make the globe safe for their people, and their friends, the Jews. There is nothing silly, or sentimental, or Utopian, about this *New Vision*. Nothing emotional : just hard headed business, and no nonsense. Only fools, or visionaries, talk of justice and human rights. The Africans, and most of the Asiatics, are not human beings; not really, you know, when you come to think of it, though the masses, everywhere, have to be fed on a great deal of religious, moral, and political cant. To be frank, the Africans, and most of the Asiatics, at best, are only a contemptible sub-species. They should not be allowed to cause any inconvenience to the Whiteman. AND THAT IS THAT.

To put the tinlid on everything, in the field of international relations, US Roving Ambassador, Averell Harriman, has proclaimed he is expecting, for the future, that USSR and US foreign policies would run parallel; they would not try to cross each other's path. Maybe you do not want to believe it. But there it is, with all its evident and subtle implications. (Pakistan Times, November, 7, 1967).

And here is another very juicy piece of the real meat, Pakistan Times, December 20, 1967 : "SOVIET ACTIVITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST NO THREAT TO USA, OR TO HER ALLIES. Washington, December 19. A US spokesman said yesterday that the Soviet activities in the Middle East bear careful watching at the time, but they do not present any threat to the United States, or its allies."

Over the grave apprehensions, in regard to Russia's great need for warm water seaports, on the Persian Gulf, voiced in the Introduction, some friends and critics have pressed hard for documentary proof, in support of a conclusion, drawn by applying a pitiless logic to current events and trends, in the international situation. At the time these discussions took place, nothing of the kind was to hand. Subsequently, however, from a hidden streak of some sheer devilment, Chance led the oracle to this documentary proof —not a secret paper but a famous book, in cold print, The Second World War, by Winston S. Churchill. Some background of the question has been given in Volume II, pages 519-520. Then Churchill returns to the subject in Volume V, page 336.

In the Teheran Conference, Stalin raised the question Churchill and Roosevelt approved the idea, and gave virtually a free hand to Russia, when it felt the time was ripe. The Dardanelles and the Bosphorus came into the talk, and here again Churchill and President Roosevelt took the Russian demand as justified that both should be declared an open passage.

The cards on the table, thus, seem to indicate that the moment the Suez position has been cleared, giving a free passage even to Israel, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles also would be given a similar new status ; naval units and merchant shipping of all nations would pass in and out, without any let or hindrance.

This is the way Turkey, the Arabs, and Iran, are to be dished out, for the delectation of the USSR, UK and the USA, policies of the Big Three running parallel, to achieve one and the same aim, namely, to break the backbone of the Muslim World.

There was a time when the unification of Germany was a terribly hot question between the USA and the USSR. It is curious one never hears anything about it now.

The prime role in these fine doings, today, is that of President Johnson. A very strong opposition to his policies was springing up in USA, but he seems to have reduced it to silence, by just one seemingly simple statement, and a show of talks with Hanoi. But the way he is going in the matter of these talks, it is not likely that anything worthwhile would emerge at Paris. What he will do after these negotiations have failed, is anybody's guess.

By the way, who killed President Kennedy, and why? The declared view of the US Government under President Johnson is there was no conspiracy at the back. Then Dr. King was shot. Only a few hours after this murder, the Attorny-General thought it was necessary for him to declare there was no evidencc of any conspiracy behind the murder. When the investigation is just beginning, this statement appears to be very strange, even improper.

Then another Kennedy was shot. He was a likely candidate for the Presidential Chair. Had he lived, and gone to the White House, he might have wanted to give other angles to policies being pursued by President Johnson. So he had to pay the penalty with his life.

It is to be carefully noted that in this case, again, there has been a tendency in some important official circles to make people believe there is no conspiracy at the back of this murder. An AFP dispatch, dateline Washington, June 6, reported that Justice Secretary Ramsay Clark "said here yesterday that on the basis of present knowledge 'there is no evidence of conspiracy to kill Sen. Kennedy.' He said the evidence suggested that the shooting was an individual act."

Now let us look more closely at this conspiracy business, which official people have been so quick to deny. The gunman in this case knew that Sen Kennedy was likely to pass that way, though it was a way to the kitchen, which the Senator used because it offered a short cut, for him, to reach another room in the hotel, where he was to hold a press conference. The gun-

man's presence on this route means he had intimate and accurate knowledge of the way his victim's mind would work, to make him take the short cut. This knowledge about Sen. Kennedy's mind and habits is not possible for the gunman in question, on the basis of his own observation and judgement. Evidently, he was planted there by someone with almost an uncanv insight into the mind and habits, the psychology, of Robert Kennedy, on the basis of scientific research of the kind many people believe the CIA maintains about personalities it might have to deal with, in some capacity. Thus it would seem to appear that there are agencies which do not hesitate to take a leaf out of the CIA Notebook.

Let us call this agency a secret, extremely Sinister High Command, with immense resources, in funds, and tools, carefully selected, and finely tempered, to work like magic, in a thousand and one possible situations.

This High Command is very clear in its mind. It knows what it wants ; tolerates no inhibitions likely to interfere with the achievement of its aims, always prepared to pay the price. The personnel of this High Command need not all be American. Its basic aims admit foreign shareholders, people in sympathy, prepared to work earnestly for the achievement of a common purpose—for instance, to establish an absolute political dominance of the Whiteman, all over the earth, and to perpetuate it, by weeding out the Coloured poople, especially from the better productive, and more strategic areas of Africa, and other points of similar importance, in other parts of the

globe. Permitted pockets of the Coloured people would have automatic controls, to prevent their number from passing the safety line for the White masters.

President Johnson need not even be aware of the existance of this Sinister High Command. But deep down in his heart, this political philosophy dominates his mind, and colours his decisions, overtly, or covertly, it does not matter very much.

Understandably, therefore, Johnson is an especial darling of this Sinister High Command. Among the votaries of this dark and gruesome political creed, you see, he has far more power to place at the disposal of this Command, than any other single individual in the world. He is the especial darling of the High Command in question, just as South Africa, Rhodesia, Israel, and India, are the very especial darlings of LBJ—the four countries most well known for the contempt with which they treat UN decisions, and the sub-human status they give to the Arabs, the Blacks, the Kashmiris, and the Untouchables—all in varying degrees of one and the same political principle, called apartheid in one place, Untouhability in another, blithely giving to a large part of mankind the position of a contemptible breed of beasts of burden.

Then there is the murder of Dr. King, designed to madden the American Blacks, to make them violent and revengful, prone to lawlessness, where they would, progressively, be losing the sympathy of liberal Americans, and where they would be throwing

themselves, repeatedly, on the revolving blades of a merciless scythe, to be neatly mowed down in time, and finished, leaving the Whiteman in an undisputed ownership of the USA.

In any analysis of Soviet-American relations, one has to remember that these relations began to go queer, after the showdown, or an avoidance of show-down, over Cuba. Why fight, and extinguish the White civilzation? Why not divide God's good earth in reasonable shares? Let us eliminate virmin, then live in plentiful peace.

Suppose draft proposals, in a very tentative capacity, in the light of this political philo-phy, were put before President Kennedy, the man who resolutely declined to lend his name to the highly interesting drama put up by an invisible agency in the Bay of Pigs. President Kennedy first demurred, then positively refused to have anything to do with aims of that inhuman kind. Following this refusal, what was his position in the eyes of the Sinister High Command, where the draft proposals originated? Since now he knew the inner core of the diabolical mind of this High Command, he was now a most dangerous man for that outfit. A consciencious fool, in some crucial situation, he might come to feel it was his duty to denounce the proposals, and openly condemn the High Command. To ensure his silence, in a game where the stakes were desparately, and irretrievably high, he had to be killed. We know, after everything possible had been done to pass off the great historic, world-shaking murder as the individual, personal act of some obscure gunman, Garrison has come out

boldly with a statement that he is on the track of evidence which implicates elements of the CIA—an organisation, understandably, with many tiers of authority, purpose, and planning.

Johnson, as Vice President, must have known of the existance of these tentative draft proposals—tentative only in the eyes of people like President Kennedy, but an absolute MUST in the eyes of many of those with whom they had originated. May be LBJ viewed them with favour. When he became a willing tool, he had to be maintained in strength for the longest period of time; and then another man had to be found to be put in his place, who could absolutely be relied upon for not abandoning the Johnson policies and planning, perfected under the inspiration of what we are here calling the Sinister High Command.

Further, if the Sinister High Command somehow came to suspect that Bobby had some inkling on the point; or that a chip of the old block, he would go the way of his elder brother, there was reason enough that he should be silenced before he had time to inflict any real injury on the great aims, in Bobb's eyes which probably amounted to nefarious, inhuman motivations.

It is disquieting that American leaders of calibre, like Fullbright, Mansfield, Lippmann, and others of this fearless type, have not given their reaction to the two murders, of Dr. King, and Sen. Robert Kennedy. What is holding them back?. The Sinister High Command, and LBJ, its champion in the field,

are making sure of perpetuating the chosen policies. If at all they desire to salvage the American image abroad, Johnson must be impeached in the Congress: there is no other way to stop him. Wc must remember at one time he was dangerously on the brink of emptying a basket of atomic bombs over South East Asia, and had to be held back by them all, with the added persuation of the British and the Russian Prime Ministers. If nothing acceptable to him emerges from the Paris talks, what he, or his representative at the white House, will do, No one knows.

Anyway, there can be no denying the fact that vast plans stand ready for world-wide genocides, if need be, by various means: nuclear bombs and tactical nuclear weapons; chemical and germ warfare; even large scale steralisation of the males and females in any locality, by contaminating their sources of food and water supplies. No use to look horrified. If you dont feel inclined to accept the truth of the last part, go and make your inquiries from Professor Paul Ehrlich, Stanford University Biologist (Pakistan Times, November 23, 1967).

The market for some of these basic chemicals, at the moment, is said to be very tight in USA. New tools for silent, wholesale destruction, have been invented, and carefully tested. When and where, how and how far, they would be used remains to be seen.
July 28, 1968.

The sharp and swift occupation of Czechoslovakia, by the fighting forces of the Warsaw Pact Five,

seems to have been designed to furnish Washington with an unanswerable argument, to convince Bonn that unification of Germany cannot be attempted without risking a Nuclear World War, first and foremost, which would destroy Germany itself, even in its dismembered form.

In all likelihood, to manufacture unanswerable arguments of this kind forms part and parcel of some basic understanding between Moscow, Washington, and London. Israel cannot be checked without risking a Nuclear World War. Germany cannot be unified, without risking a Nuclear World War. Turkish fortifications on the Bosphorus, and the Dardanelles, cannot be maintained without risking a Nuclear World War. Russia cannot be prevented from swooping down on the Persian Gulf, for warm water seaports, without risking a Nuclear World War. The helpless African Blacks cannot be snatched out of the jaws of South Africa and Rhodesia, without risking a Nuclear World War—so on, and so forth.

Let Humanity read these Riddles, as best as it can, to ensure survival of decency, and the higher values, essential for the corporate life of human beings, as distinct from the life of the lower animals.
September 2, 1968.

CORRIGENDUM

INTRODUCTION : Page *vii*, line 26, read July instead of August.